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ANNE BOLEYN.

BY MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS.

CHAPTER I.

—  
"Oh, what a pure and sacred thing  
Is Beauty, curtained from the sight  
Of the gross world, illumining  
One only mansion with her light!  
Unseen by man's disturbing eye—  
The flower that blooms beneath the sea,  
Too deep for sunbeams, doth not lie  
Hid in more chaste obscurity."  
—

IN fifteen hundred and twenty—just before that period when Henry the Eighth commenced his war against the prevailing religion of England—there was a May day fete in one of those small villages that had sprung to existence over almost every nobleman's domain in the kingdom as the feudal system gradually diminished. The particular spot where our story leads us, lay in the centre of a beautiful but not very extensive estate, on the borders of Norfolk. Rich woodlands lay around it, and half embowered among the distant trees was a handsome stone building, half castle, half hall, irregular in its construction, but lending an aspect of feudal grandeur to the landscape. This building was the property and present residence of Sir Thomas Boleyn, and had fallen into his possession as a marriage dower on his espousals with the Duke of Norfolk's youngest daughter.

The castle, for so it was called, notwithstanding the irregularity of its construction, stood upon rising ground, and overlooked a pleasant sweep of arable land upon which the village stood, embowered in the level woodland; farther on were the low, grey walls of a monastery, and half way between that and the village stood a huge windmill, which, on the day in question, was now and then propelled to a heavy tumbling motion by the sweet gushes of a spring breeze that seemed coquetting with its huge wings, now sending them round with a sudden whirl, then dying away and leaving them to struggle to and fro in the vain effort to gather strength for another sweep.

A wooden building, two stories high, with massive cornices and heavy door-posts, exhibiting many a rich attempt at carved work, stood in the centre of the village. It had several small windows in front, filled with lozenge shaped pieces of glass, and over the door was a portico, upon which some artist of a bye-gone age had exhausted his skill in carving the Norfolk arms, joined to many a rude device of his own in the shape of stag's heads, wreathed fantastically with implements of the chase, and other inventions, the meaning of which was not so easily detected. The highway rose in front of this building, and on the other side was a broad space of rich sward, on which the May-pole, garlanded heavily with flowers, was planted. This sweep of open ground ran to the wooded hill-side from which the castle looked down, and many a foot-path shot from the trees in various directions across it toward the inn.

It was getting late in the afternoon, and the village revels were at their height; the blossoms garlanded about the May-pole were drooping; the dance in which yeoman and maiden had exhibited unflinching spirit began to flag. A group of Archers that had been testing their skill in woodcraft at a target in one corner of the grounds, were lying at half length on the grass. Some of them idly tossing about fragments of broken arrows that lay thick around the target, while others were busy tightening their relaxed bow strings, laughing and joking together.

"And so we are not to have the great folks from the castle, it seems," said one of the group, giving the bow-string which he had been tightening a twang that sounded half across the grounds. A youth in livery, who stood with his shoulder against the target, and gazed restlessly upon the dancers who were grouped about the May-pole, chatting merrily together, half turned his face toward the speaker.

"And who told you that, most wise wood ranger?" he said, listening, but without turning his eyes from the May-pole.

"Who told me, why the shadows that are

creeping over us from the wood," answered the ranger, crossing one foot over the other and leaning upon his bow. "You need not look so fierce upon it!" continued the careless youth with a laugh—"I did not get my news from Madge Wakefield, she has been too much occupied with the strange youth to cast away words on either of us. See, how earnestly she is chatting with him now, away from the dancers too. Faith, I would give something to know who this young hopeful is."

"I will know!" replied the man in livery, biting his lip and turning white with rage, as he saw the stranger, who had been an object of curiosity all day, withdrawing still more decidedly from those around the May-pole with pretty Madge Wakefield leaning coquettishly on his arm. "I will know!"

"It is strange that no one here can make out the badge that he wears on the sleeve of his blue jerkin," resumed the other. "I know the cognizance of every great person who has visited Sir Thomas' within these five years, but I cannot make this one out. I wonder how long he has been at the inn?"

"Since this morning," replied the other impatiently—"she never saw him till this day I am certain. Yet look how the creature hangs upon his arm?"

"Madge had always a right loving way of her own, and the stranger has a comely face!" persisted the forester mischievously, bent on adding fuel to the jealous ire of his companion.

"He is a jackanapes—and she a——"

"Tut—tut—never rail against thy sweetheart because she has a quick eye, and knows the cut of a shapely limb, even though it may not be cased in thy own red hosen, Ralph," cried the forester, glancing at the graceful and stalwart form of his companion with a laughing eye. "If pretty Madge has allowed her little heart to rove for a morning, whose fault is it but Ralph Hardy's? Did he not leave the May dance and take to the wrestlers? Was he not shearing arrows on that target, and hurling quoits yonder half an hour before Madge even spoke to the strange youth?"

"Nay, but he had never taken his eyes from her during the whole of that time," replied the discontented lover sullenly, "and she—did I not see her returning and encouraging his glances with more freedom than a modest maiden should while her arm was within that of her own true love? Was I not right in taking to the games when she could scarcely spare me a look?"

"And so leave the field to thy handsome rival—well, every man must follow his own judgment, but methinks the wiser way would have

been to have danced her into a pleasant humor thyself. Thy sullen face has been enough all day to frighten poor Madge into breaking with thee forever!"

"Would that Sir Thomas or my young lady had seen it!" cried the irritated youth, snatching a headless shaft from the ground and snapping it in twain with both hands, eager to appease his wrath by violence against something. "Efaith, there they come—now we shall see if Mistress Madge will have the courage to hang on his arm before them!"

The young serving man was right—down a vista in the wood which stretched between the village and the castle, came a group of persons evidently of a much higher grade than any of the happy revellers scattered over the grounds. It was composed of two females, and as many of the other sex, all richly, even gorgeously dressed according to the fashion of the times, and walking two by two rather hastily down one of the broadest foot-paths that intersected the grounds. Behind them came two immense stag hounds walking abreast, to whom the elder gentleman now and then turned and addressed a word as if they were old friends that could understand him. This man was about forty-five, or perhaps fifty years of age, but looking at least ten years younger; his high brow was unwrinkled by a single line—his hair was still lustrous and abundant, and nothing could be more brilliant than his fine eyes. His form was of that commanding proportion which gives dignity to any costume, and in the sumptuous dress of the times there was something almost regal in his appearance. Upon his arm leaned a young girl who had arrived at that sweet age when the untaught graces of the girl glide into the mellowed and rich loveliness of womanhood almost imperceptibly, as the blossom unfolds itself and swells to a most luscious fruit. Though tall and somewhat slender, her form was rounded into that delicate and yet luxurious beauty that arouses the beholder to a glow of perfect admiration, exciting all that is ideal or earthly in the mind at once. There was a pliancy in her movements—a soft, undulating grace, seldom found even among the most high born of English maidens, and this, perhaps, more than her arch beauty, threw around her a fascination that none could resist. She was walking somewhat hurriedly, and exercise gave both bloom and animation to a face so changeable in its bright expression that it seemed impossible to give a correct outline even of the features. But lips red as the most vivid coral when it is drawn damp from the ocean; and eyes of that deep purplish blue which seldom remains after infancy,

were joined to an exquisite parity of complexion to which not even the rose leaf can be compared. Though magnificence even to gorgeousness was affected by high-born females of that reign, the lady we are describing was dressed with far less attempt of display than might have been expected from her beauty and position. A veil or scarf of rich crimson silk was flung carelessly over her magnificent tresses, almost concealing them, though here and there a wave or tress would break through, enriched with that peculiar tinge of hazy gold which sometimes imparts to brown hair the appearance of a sunbeam streaming over it. Her round and exquisitely white arms were revealed to the elbow by loose hanging sleeves whenever they were in motion, and down her lovely person flowed the azure velvet folds of a robe heavily embroidered with gold, that would have swept the earth but that the train was flung in graceful drapery over her left arm, while her small right hand rested on the arm of her stately companion.

As this beautiful girl issued from the shaded walk and looked through the foliage that still embowered her upon this scene of rustic festivity, her face brightened, and she turned a glance of sparkling good humor back upon the two persons walking directly behind in the path.

"You see that the good villagers are not so broken-hearted at our absence after all," she said in French, and the soft accents of her voice gave peculiar sweetness to the foreign language, though she spoke it a little imperfectly. "They scarcely seem to heed us now that we are here."

"Nay, Anne, they have not seen us yet," cried a young man, who seemed desirous of lingering behind to wait for the young companion who ostensibly walked by his side, but every other instant darted from the path in search of some forest flower or colored pebble, with a sort of childish inconstancy. "Do not walk so fast. Here, poor Eleanor has entangled her robe in this thicket. Unless you and Sir Thomas check this headlong speed we shall be left to seek the May-pole in company with the hounds only!"

The first couple passed and turned back at this appeal, waiting very patiently while the young man disentangled the crimson train of his companion's robe, and aided her back to the path again. She had wounded her hand in rescuing her dress from the thorns, and a drop of blood started out on one of the rosy fingers as she held it up, laughing gaily at the accident.

"This comes of seeking a forbidden path," said Anne Boleyn, glancing a half mischievous look at her brother from beneath her long eye-lashes. "I gave you both fair warning."

The young man blushed crimson at this half serious, half playful remark, but the female, whose robe he had rescued from the thorns, retained her placidity of countenance, save that a smile, which had a slight dash of defiance in it, played on her exquisite mouth as she shook the ruby drop from her finger. It fell upon one of those small white blossoms that so often waste their purity on a forest path.

"See how it stains the blossom," she said, casting a look of calm audacity at Sir Thomas and his daughter—"still the pretty bud could not choose but receive it, how tamely it bends upon its stalk burdened, but yet of a richer color. Nay, is it not even more beautiful than before, sweet Anne?"

"Nay, I think the poor bud ruined forever," said Anne, pointedly; "see how it stoops to the earth."

"It will rise again!" replied the other, pressing a row of pearl-white teeth into the crimson of her under lip;—"it will rise again!"

"Not under that red weight!" replied Anne, pointing toward the flower, on which the drop hung, trembling like a ruby.

"We shall see!" rejoined Eleanor.

That instant, the blood-drop fell to the earth, leaving the snow-white petals of the flower glossy and stainless as before. A smile dimpled Anne Boleyn's lips, and, without speaking, she resumed her father's arm, and moved down the path.

The color left Eleanor Howard's cheek, and even her lips grew white; she placed her small foot upon the blossom and crushed it to the earth, pressing her beautiful lips hard, while a gleam of bitter feeling shot from beneath her black eye-lashes.

"So perish all——" The slight touch of a hand on her's, checked the fierce murmur that was breaking audibly from her lips. She started—the expression of bitter hate left her face, and when she lifted her eyes toward Arthur Boleyn's they were swimming in tears.

"You heard her!" she exclaimed, with a quivering lip. "She has detected our secret—she scorns and tramples on me!"

The young man was fearfully moved. Rage at his sister's scarcely concealed allusions to the stain which rested on Eleanor Howard's birth, and pity for the being he loved almost unmanned him. He could no longer deceive himself with the belief that his passion for the beautiful girl was a secret, or that it would ever meet with the approbation of his haughty sister, or Sir Thomas, who had gravely listened to the little dialogue between the two girls without interposing a word. Arthur had only once ventured



to lift his eyes toward his father during the scene, and then he encountered a look so stern and reproving, that his last hope of paternal favor fell to the earth. Still, though his own heart misgave him, the generous youth strove to reassure his companion.

"It meant nothing," he answered; "it was only a careless speech of my ever careless sister," he said, pleadingly. "She loves you, Eleanor—my father loves you; are you not his ward—the daughter of his friend?"

"I know—I know what I am!" cried the young girl, interrupting him with bitter warmth, such as her cautious nature seldom yielded to. "See, they are looking back—she shall not triumph in my tears!"

Passing her hand across her eyes and assuming a self-control that seemed marvellous in a creature so youthful, Eleanor moved on, holding up the skirts of her robe with one hand which, tranquil as she seemed, clutched and unclutched itself among the glowing folds with a restless motion that might have betrayed the struggle of passions fierce and deep, existing under the gentle exterior which she had so readily assumed.

Sir Thomas and his daughter were waiting their approach, sheltered from the village grounds by a clump of oaks that overhung the path just where it turned into the green sward. A few words only had passed between the two, but they opened a source of anxiety to the proud baronet which plainly revealed itself upon his face, as he looked upon the young couple, who seemed to come toward him with reluctance.

"Arthur, you may take charge of Anne, while Miss Howard walks with me," said Sir Thomas, as his son came up. The gravity of his manner—the courteous and almost compassionate tone of his voice might have swept away, or, at least, have softened the rancorous passions that were still awake in Eleanor Howard's bosom; but, though she took his arm and walked on with downcast eyes, seed had been scattered in her proud heart that day which brought forth bitter fruit in after years.

The moment Sir Thomas came in sight of the villagers, there was a commotion of delight among them. The wrestlers paused in their athletic strife, the half-wearied archers started from their resting places on the grass, and a group of dancers around the May-pole darted off toward the tent, from which they soon issued, bearing among them a heavy garland of leaves and flowers that had been kept fresh in the shade. While some of the group tore down the withered garlands, those with the fresh one in charge bore it across the sward with a joyous

clamor of voices, and before the baronet and his family came up it was coiled around the pole, with an immense bouquet unfolding its floral glories at the summit in honor of his presence.

A rural throne, cushioned with wood-moss, and carpeted for yards around with forest flowers, was placed near the May-pole. Anne Boleyn took possession of the nearest cushion, and called for Eleanor to sit beside her. There was something in her voice and the graceful humility of her manner, as she did this, which amounted almost to an apology for the words that had passed between them in the forest. A smile lay upon Eleanor's lip as she received this delicate concession, but neither humility nor frankness was visible in it. She sat down at Anne Boleyn's feet, instead of accepting a position by her side, and the smile took an expression of crafty hate that might have made the beauty tremble upon her moss throne, had she witnessed it.

But the viols struck up, and from all quarters the revellers gathered around the May-pole. The wrestlers—the archers, and those who had loitered away from the dance, all crowded to the spot where Sir Thomas and the ladies were sitting—eager to catch a glance of their beautiful young mistress, who had just returned from foreign parts, and had condescended to gladden their May festival with her beautiful presence.

A spirited, and not altogether ungraceful dance, was commenced near the rural throne, which Anne Boleyn occupied, and as each maiden passed the beauty, a chaplet of flowers was dropped at her feet. Some of these blossoms fell upon Eleanor Howard, but, though she received them with a gracious smile, they were invariably laid upon the lap of her friend, till Anne was half buried in the fragrant tribute.

As Madge Wakefield came dancing by, with her arm interlocked in those of the stranger youth, Anne started half up, and a shower of wild blossoms flowed from her lap to the ground. The man had flung her a simple wreath, all of white in color, and intended to conceal a slip of parchment entwined in the stem. In her eagerness to catch this wreath, Anne lost half the sweet gifts that had been lavished upon her; but this was quite unheeded. With a quick glance around, as if to be certain that she was free from scrutiny, she untwisted the parchment with trembling fingers, and read the few lines it contained.

Never was there a change so beautiful as that which came over Anne Boleyn after she had read the parchment. The soft languor that had crept over her was swept away; her blue eyes sparkled beneath their silken lashes, and the

color on her cheek grew brighter and brighter, like the unfolding heart of a rose.

The parchment lay crushed fondly in her little palm, and, though many eyes were upon her, she could not resist a desire to press her lips down upon the precious fragment; still, she blushed in doing it, and concealed the movement by pressing the blossoms also to her lips, while her eyes eagerly followed the man who had cast them into her lap, as he whirled by in the dance. He seemed to observe her anxiety, and paused, with the waiting woman clinging to his arm, close by the moss throne. Anne beckoned him to her and addressed him courteously.

"Your master—speak sir—how long before he may be expected?" she inquired, with a hurried murmur.

"He is already in the wood, up yonder, hoping for an opportunity to speak a word with some one before he ventures up to the castle."

Anne gave a startled look over her shoulder, and spoke again—

"Is there no way of resuming the games?" she said. "The target is placed close on the skirts of the wood."

"True, noble Mistress," replied the man, guessing at her desire—"it would be but a step from the target up to the greenwood. Shall I challenge some one to a trial of the long bow?"

"Yes—yes—lose no time," she exclaimed, with a sort of nervous haste, for Sir Thomas had drawn close to the seat.

Instantly the stranger led his partner from the dance and approaching Ralph Hardy, with an air of cool assurance challenged him to a trial at the target.

"I have already won the prize," replied Ralph sturdily, "but bestir me if I refuse a challenge of skill in anything from thee. Move on with thy bow, I will follow."

"And then select thy sweetheart from the crowd that she may smile on the victor," said the gay youth, playing with the string of his bow, and casting a side glance toward Madge Wakefield.

"I have no sweetheart," replied Ralph, turning resolutely from the looks of pretty Madge Wakefield. "In a trial like this men should be the judges. Come."

Madge gave her pretty head a toss and withdrew behind her mistress with a saucy pout on her lips, and, spite of her efforts, with tears sparkling in her eyes. The two young men moved away, and were followed by half the crowd, eager to witness a passage of skill between two persons who in a contest of skill that day, had been the best archers on the grounds.

"Shall we follow?" said Anne, rising from amid the flowers in which she was half buried, and addressing her companion. "Come, Eleanor, this is a pastime that always interests you. Perhaps Arthur will fly an arrow in our behalf."

With these words Anne gathered up the drapery of her robe, and sweeping through the pile of blossoms that lay around her feet, moved toward the group of archers. Sir Thomas followed with his still restless son; Eleanor forsook her seat also, and almost all the crowd flowed toward the archery grounds. But when Ralph Hardy turned with a triumphant look toward the spot where Anne had been standing to witness his skill, he found the place vacant.

Accompanied by Madge, Anne had stolen into the wood. Her absence seemed to surprise him, but upon the stranger's face it brought an exulting glow that almost cost Ralph the victory.

The trial of skill had been made half an hour before Anne Boleyn or her maid were seen in the open grounds again. When they did come back and stealthily take their places in the crowd, Anne's sweet face was in a perfect glow of delight, and her small hands trembled till she could hardly arrange the scarf over her tresses. She had seen something to stir her heart in the greenwood. Eleanor Howard saw this and smiled a cold, crafty smile.


TO BE CONTINUED.



## ANNE BOLEYN.

BY MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS.

## CHAPTER II.



She loved! and lo, that proud young heart  
Was touched with many a glowing dream;  
Like fountains, that 'mid blossoms start,  
And take from thence a rosy gleam.  
Calmly she paused upon the way  
That led her up to queenly state,  
To pluck the first sweet joys that lay  
Along the thorn path of her fate.

THE ancestral hall of Sir Thomas Boleyn was bathed in the clear moonlight of a glorious May evening. The noble old park which surrounded it was one broad expanse of light and darkness. Its majestic oaks and giant chestnuts cast their shadows downward with a blackness profound and almost solemn, while a luminous flood came pouring over the thick foliage with which they were clothed, trembling in and out through the glancing leaves, occasionally revealing a gnarled bough, and shooting down to the velvet sward now and then with a faint flash that played upon the shadows like a gleam of quick-silver, and was lost again. There was a fresh breeze stirring through these mighty old oaks, tossing the foliage about and making a sweet tumult among the leaves that were yet soft and delicate with their fresh spring tints. Wherever the trees stood in their primeval thickness the contrast between the cloud of tossing silver showering over their tops, and the unbroken blackness underneath was almost startling. Everything was shrouded in gloom near the earth, while the wind and light, and the whispering leaves were in a perfect riot overhead. Still there were places in the park where the light had breadth, and the shadows more transparency. Avenues led to the hall, whose extremities were lost in the green depths half a mile distant, and though arched with massive branches woven and knotted together, the light fell through them to the velvet sward in a thousand fantastic and picturesque shapes, like frost tracery on an emerald ground. Many a vista also was out through the heavy timber, and there the moonbeams lay upon the earth broad and clear like a flagging of solid silver. In truth there was no form, picturesque or beautiful, in which light and shade could blend that was not exemplified in that broad park on the beautiful May evening which followed the fete of flowers described in our last chapter.

About ten o'clock that night, a small postern leading to one of these avenues was cautiously opened, and Anne Boleyn, accompanied by Madge



Wakefield, came stealthily through. Instead of walking down the avenue they kept among the trees that skirted it, thus concealing themselves in shadow, and giving an air of mystery to their movements. They had proceeded but a short distance from the hall when Anne paused, suddenly, and laid her hand upon Madge's arm.

"Heard you nothing, Madge?" she said in a half whisper, and holding her breath to listen. "Methought there was a stir in the branches."

"I hear nothing," replied Madge, casting an anxious look along the avenue and among the trees. "Was it hereabouts that you hoped to find some person?"

"Nay, it must have been a doe moving in her form," said Anne, speaking to herself rather than the maid. "He would never have ventured so near the hall."

In this Anne Boleyn mistook the impatience of her lover, for the words had scarcely left her lips when a figure, which she knew to be his, notwithstanding the groom's cloak in which it was shrouded, came hastily through the trees and approached the spot where she was standing.

"Fall back, Madge!" she said in a fluttered voice, turning to her attendant and drawing the crimson scarf that she still wore over her head. "Keep within sight, but out of ear-shot!"

"Nay, lady, I am to be trusted!" expostulated the girl, who had her reasons for wishing to hear something of what was about to pass, and was especially desirous of seeing the person who came near.

"Hush, and away—I brought thee not hither to prate," cried Anne, with an impatient wave of the hand.

"But the park is so lonely," persisted the girl, "who knows but this person may be one of the Greenwood robbers, who will plunder my sweet lady of her ruby organs, and—and——"

"Withdraw at once to yonder clump of trees, and wait till thou art summoned," cried Anne, with an air of quiet command, that even in her girlhood gave something of queenly bearing to the maiden. "I will require thy presence when it shall be needful."

The girl could find no other excuse for remaining, and drew back the more readily that she observed that the man whom she was so desirous of seeing had paused in the shadow of a tree, as if in surprise at finding more than one person present. Anne Boleyn hesitated—glanced back to assure herself that Madge was at a distance, then the tumultuous joy of her heart broke over all control, and darting forward with the grace of a bird, she joined her lover before he could leave the shadow which half concealed him.

"Percy!" oh, what a world of passionate love broke forth in that little word.

"My lady Anne, my own, my beloved!" cried Percy, as he pressed one glowing kiss after another on her pure forehead, while she struggled but faintly to release her form from his clasp. "Oh, this one moment is worth all the agony of suspense that I have endured."

"And you are here at last—at last!" cried the happy girl, lifting her eyes to his face with a bewildering look of affection. "Oh, how I have waited for this moment!—how I have prayed and hoped for it! You tremble, Percy, and I—but it is with happiness—is it not?"

Percy pressed her clasped hands to his lips. How those little rosy hands glowed and trembled with the warmth of his kisses.

"Ah, it was too cruel that single word—the one glance as you passed me in the greenwood this afternoon," said Percy, in gentle reproach.

"We were watched," replied Anne, "one of our young men is the lover of my pretty waiting woman Madge, who was rather more free than is seemly with the messenger who brought me news of your coming. He saw her turn into Greenwood path just after your servitor left the ground, and so followed in a fit of jealousy."

"Think you he saw my face?" questioned Percy with some anxiety.

"Nay, with that horseman's cloak and the slouching cap, I could scarcely recognize it myself," replied Anne, with a laugh that broke from her lips, rich and low, like the gush of old wine when freed from its crystal prison, and lifting her hand she playfully removed the bonnet of russet velvet, which, with its heavy black plume, concealed the noble contour of her lover's head.

"Now," she said, "cast that ponderous cloak to the earth, that I may see how much a court life has changed thee from what thou was when Anne Boleyn first gave thee her heart."

Percy allowed the cloak to fall from his person, and obeying the impulse of Anne's hand, moved to where the parted branches admitted a broad gleam of moonlight to fall upon his head.

"Am I not unchanged in all things?" he said, bending his dark eyes on her face with an expression that thrilled to her heart.

"Thou art the dearest and bravest lord in all Christendom," cried Anne, with a burst of frank admiration, at which she flushed crimson the moment after. She drew back into the shadow that he might not witness her confusion, and spurning the cloak into a heap with her little foot, sat down upon it with her back against the trunk of an oak which had afforded them concealment.

"Sit down," she said, pointing to the gnarled roots of this old tree which had broken up through the rich sward, and carved themselves into a rude knot that was not altogether uncomfortable as a seat, for a coating of luxurious moss had crept over it. "Sit down, and let us talk of that which brings us together once more. The missive so prettily conveyed by that groom in his gift of flowers—the man should have preferment, Percy—he is both shrewd and well favored. But to the missive. It only gave me a hint—enough to set the poor heart of Anne Boleyn in a sweet tumult, and no more. It said that by the queen's grace we should soon be enabled to meet freely and without fear—and oh! how my heart leaped as I read! It hinted that my father might be won to renounce the hated match with his kinsman Piers."

"The missive promised no more than may yet be accomplished, my sweet Anne," replied Percy, seating himself as the fair girl had directed.

"But how has this marvel been brought about?" inquired the lady. "Has the queen dowager of France fulfilled the promise made to me long ago, and interposed in our behalf with the king?"

"Nay, you forget how little influence the lady Mary has possessed with Henry since her secret marriage."

"True," repeated Anne—"she, poor lady, has had trouble enough to preserve herself from ruin. Still I have no other friend at court."

"And yet," said Percy, taking her hand in his while his eyes kindled, and a smile brightened his whole face. "To-morrow there will come a royal courier hitherward, with orders for Sir Thomas Boleyn to hasten up to London, that his daughter may take her place as maid of honor to our gracious Queen Catharine of Arragon, who has herself conferred the appointment."

Anne started to her feet and clasped her hands in an ecstasy of wonder and delight.

"Is this truth, Percy? Is it in verity true?" she exclaimed, turning her radiant face toward him.

"I did but precede the courier who bears the tidings by a few hours," said Percy. "By to-morrow noon, at farthest, he will reach the hall. But tell me, Anne, does this news give thee so much joy?"

"Should it not give me joy that I can ever be near to thee, that every week—perhaps every day, we, who have loved so long—we, who have only met in fear, may look each other in the face, may converse together—hope, or if it must be suffer in company. Oh! Percy, is there not joy, perfect joy in this?"

"In truth there is, and thy heart, wildly as it beats, fair Anne, looks not forward with sweeter hopes than fill mine own," replied Percy, taking the clasped hands that were still woven together and tremulous with delight between his, and drawing the happy girl down to the drapery at his feet again. "But tell me, proud one, has thy lover no cause of fear that in the giddy whirl of court life where many will be found to render homage to beauty like thine, he may be forgotten for some more favored suitor?"

Anne lifted her eyes, and a flash of proud feeling broke through their silken fringes.

"When fifteen years of age was I not cast into the gayest and most brilliant court of all Europe—that of beautiful France? There was no lack of noble suitors in that witching court; yet who even touched Anne Boleyn's heart save one only, and that one Percy."

"I know all this," replied Percy, "yet sometimes, when I think of the rare beauty which has so enthralled thee, and of the place where it will soon be exhibited, my heart misgives me, Anne. What man could withhold his worship of beauty and grace like thine?"

A smile of gratified vanity flashed over Anne Boleyn's face, and a ringing laugh at the absurdity of her own idea broke from her lips as she said, with a careless shake of the head,

"Perchance I may enthrall the king. Dost thou fear that my Percy?"

Percy laughed also; but it was not with the hearty glee that rang from the maiden's lips. He was thinking of the homage which Henry was said to have rendered at the feet of Mary Boleyn, sister to the fair girl who sat looking so archly in his face, as if to challenge another laugh at her extravagant flight of fancy.

"But time presses," said Anne, not quite pleased with his evident constraint, "and thou hast not yet told me what magician has been at work in my behalf with her grace, the queen."

"What if I say it was the great magician who rules both king and queen?" replied Percy with a bright smile.

"What, Cardinal Wolsey," cried the maiden with a look of wild bewilderment.

"Even so, sweet mistress!"

"And hast thou made the great cardinal a confidant of our love and its perplexities?" cried Anne, almost aghast with surprise.

"Even so, sweet one, his eminence has ever been a friend to my father's house since the first days of his own advancement. He marked my sadness, and questioned me often of its cause, at last I told him all."

"And did he listen to the tale of our love with patience? This stern cardinal," cried Anne.



"With more than patience—he promised to aid it. Wolsey seldom forgets a promise: and I was a favorite in his household."

"Ah, how could it be otherwise?" ejaculated Anne, lifting her eyes that were beaming with tender admiration to the lordly face of her lover.

Percy pressed her hand to his lips.

"He sent for my father and urged our cause so faithfully with the earl that he consented to wave the contract which pledged me when a boy to Shrewsbury's daughter, and acknowledge that which links me with this little hand."

"Blessings upon the good old earl!—double blessings rest on his eminence," cried Anne, while tears of grateful joy flashed to her eyes. "I little thought an act of his could ever make my heart beat thus. What have I done—so lowly and humbly endowed—to deserve this great happiness?" she paused a moment with her beautiful head bent, as if pondering over the thrilling news in her mind, when she spoke again her voice was changed. "But my father, who will persuade him from the compact which gives me to his kinsman? His honor is pledged. The king himself has urged forward the cruel sacrifice."

"Leave that to time—thy father's own ambition, and his eminence!" said Percy, "when so much has been accomplished in our behalf, it were a sin against the good already granted were we to doubt the future. Is it not enough for the present, that we are licensed to meet, to love each other, and to hope?"

"It is!—it is!" cried Anne, bowing her beautiful face to her linked hands, and weeping with pure joy. "I never hoped to be so happy again."

Percy threw one arm over her bending figure, and pressed his lips to the ringlets that fell in a glossy shower upon her interlocked hands.

"And now we must say farewell, Anne," he said in a voice that was broken and rich with tenderness—"before the dawn I must be far on my way to the court."

Anne was made conscious by these words how late the hour had become. She stood up but still clung to her lover's hand, reluctant to part without some of those thousand sweet words that are to the loving heart what perfume is to the blossom—words that seem meaningless and insipid to the third party, but are like precious music to the beings who find in them the best expression of feelings which are always too indefinite and tumultuous for anything but broken language. Her lips parted, and she was about to speak, when a noise from a thicket near by startled them both. Anne snatched up the horseman's cloak and began with eager and trembling hands to fold it around the stately form of her lover,

while he threw the velvet bonnet on his head, and shook the plume forward till it shaded his face.

"Farewell!" he whispered, wringing the little hand that would have detained him even then—"farewell."

Anne could not speak, terror and the keen pang of this abrupt parting kept her silent. Again the farewell was repeated, and Percy plunged into the wood.

Anne sprang a step after him, uttered a faint exclamation, then stood motionless and holding her breath till the elastic turf no longer gave back a sound of his footfall. Then she gathered up her scarf, which had fallen to the ground, and hurried toward the spot where Madge Wakefield had been left.

When Anne reached the clump of hawthorns, beneath which Madge had sought shelter, she found it vacant; and, though she called on her waiting woman in as loud a voice as she dare assume, all remained silent about her. Wondering, and somewhat offended at this strange conduct in a maid hitherto obedient to her slightest command, Anne walked on, slowly at first, hoping that the girl might overtake her. When she had accomplished half the distance which lay between her trysting place and the Hall, Madge came suddenly upon her through the trees which lined the avenue very thickly in that portion of the park. Anne was that moment moving through the dense shadows left by a waning moon, and the girl came hastily up with a sort of audacious freedom that her mistress had never observed in her before.

"He must have started now," said the breathless girl, in a hurried whisper; "but I dared not wait to see which way he took. I trod upon a stick, and they almost detected me."

"Madge!" cried Anne, stepping back with a look of haughty amazement; for though she had not caught all the girl was saying, the familiar tone offended her. Madge started back with a faint scream, and, though her mistress was in shadow, there was enough of light around the maid to reveal the sudden pallor that swept over her face, and she stammered confusedly. Anne interrupted her.

"How come you here, Madge?" she said, with grave displeasure. "Did I not request that you should tarry at the hawthorn bower?"

This question gave the active wit of Madge Wakefield time enough to form a reply.

"I heard a noise up hitherward, and so left the house to turn off any of the people who might be loitering in the park," she said, rapidly. "Heard you no strange sounds also, Mistress Anne?"

"It matters not if I did," replied Anne, disarmed of all suspicion by the ready invention of her maid. "Come hither, and lend me thy arm; this heavy robe is cumbersome, and my hand aches with holding it from the ground."

Madge sprang to the side of her mistress, glad to offer any service that might divert attention from herself. She relieved the small hand with which Anne had kept her train from the ground, and throwing the drapery over her own arm, besought the young lady to lean upon it for support also.

The fright which Anne had received, and the reaction of strong feelings, suddenly checked, rendered this support absolutely needful. So leaning upon the shoulder of her attendant, who was much shorter than herself, she walked slowly forward, till both mistress and maid disappeared through the little postern.

## CHAPTER III.

LORD PERCY had torn himself from the being of his most devoted love, and with his heart and brain full of her, was making his way down the footpath which Anne and her father had pursued on their walk to the village that afternoon, when the quick step of a female seemed following him. Thinking that it might be Anne, whom some after-thought had induced to seek him again, Percy checked his pace, and at length paused altogether, striving to descry the figure of his mistress in the path behind him. As he paused, the footsteps ceased also, but there was a slight rustling of the under foliage close by him, and supposing that the sound must have arisen from some restless deer, of which the park was full, the young nobleman smiled at his own fancy in supposing that Anne Boleyn would have sought him there, and was about to pursue his way to the village. But as he turned for that purpose, the form of a female, slighter and of far less imposing appearance than Anne Boleyn, was standing in his path.

Percy started back, for the figure had glided before him, noiselessly as an apparition, and even in the dim light he thought that the face turned full upon him was one that he had seen before. A glow of moonlight falling through the boughs overhead convinced him that it was so, and with a look of astonishment, mingled with something of disgust, he drew back still more decidedly. Some fierce struggle of passions seemed to keep the female silent, for it was evidently with a choking effort that she spoke. At last, though her dark eyes had been fixed, during a full half minute, on his face—"Has Lord Henry Percy so entirely forgotten Eleanor Howard that he can find no word of

greeting for her?" She said in a voice that shook with suppressed passion.

"I could not expect—how could I anticipate your presence here, alone and so late at night?" said the young noble, in a cold voice. "Had we met in a proper place and hour, Mistress Howard should not have to reproach me for lack of courtesy."

Eleanor Howard laughed, a ~~low~~ mocking laugh that brought the blood to Percy's cheek. He had heard that laugh before.

"It was both a proper place and hour, where you sat, not ten minutes since, with Anne Boleyn weeping on your bosom."

"Mistress Howard, allow me to pass," said Percy, in a tone of stern indignation. "It may be seemly for a well-born gentlewoman to play the eavesdropper on her host's daughter, but I will not listen while her own lips disclose the base act."

As he spoke, Percy turned aside, and was about to pass on, but the strange girl moved also, grasping the skirts of his heavy cloak with her hand.

"It is not denied, then! Lord Percy does not care even to mitigate his conduct—his treachery to one——" She paused, gasped for breath, and stood with her glittering black eyes riveted on his face, striving to speak on, and yet voiceless.

Percy gazed on her in glances cold and stern as death—again he made an effort to move on.

"Thou shalt not leave me. I will not be thus spurned," she cried, clenching her white teeth in an agony of passion. "Thou shalt not love another, Harry Percy. What woman can ever love thee as I have done, as I did when a child? Hast thou forgotten it all—hast thou entirely cast aside the olden time when Eleanor Howard was thy sister?"

"And my sister thou shouldst ever have been," said Percy, with more of feeling than he had yet exhibited; "but did a brother's love content thee even as a child, what would have contented thee short of devotion, such as I had not to give thee? I have forgotten nothing of the past—nothing of the time when thou wert the fellow student and friend of Shrewsbury's daughter, but the contract which bound my boyhood to that lady, rendered more than a brother's love to her friend treachery to her."

"And is there no treason to the daughter of Earl Shrewsbury in thy presence here, Lord Percy? Was faithlessness for Eleanor Howard, who loved thee to idolatry in her very childhood, more dishonorable than faithlessness in behalf of Anne Boleyn—the pampered and proud—who is herself most solemnly plighted to her own kinsman?"

The blood rushed over Percy's brow, and retreated, leaving him more sternly pale than before.

"Beware, Mistress Howard!" he said, "how the name of that pure and lofty maiden is taken. It were safer to trifle with that of Catharine of Arragon herself."

"Is she not forth this night to receive thy love plight, false Lord, while her hand, as thine, is pledged to another?" cried Eleanor, bitterly. "Wherefore, then, should I use her name so daintily? What should prevent me going up to the Hall now as her accuser? Why should I not expose this night wanderer to her ~~son~~ father and his household before I sleep?"

"Thy own secret compact with Arthur Boleyn, the son and heir might be revealed to Sir Thomas at the same moment," replied Percy, with a cold smile.

Eleanor dropped the little hand which she had raised menacingly, and her face turned deathly white. A moment she struggled for speech.

"By what treachery have I been encompassed, that this knowledge should be given to thy keeping?" she said at last, in a tone of uncontrolled wonder.

"By no treachery, fair mistress, did I become possessed of this secret. The heir of Sir Thomas himself informed me of that which has passed with his sister's guest. He seems to have no wish that it should be kept secret."

Eleanor did not appear to understand these words. Her head was bent, and her crossed hands fell loosely downward. She seemed completely crushed and humbled. Till that day she had deemed her artful designs on the hand of Arthur Boleyn utterly unsuspected, even by his sister. The certainty that it was known, not only to her, but to Lord Percy, the one of all others from whom she would have kept the knowledge, completely overwhelmed a spirit usually bold even to audacity. All at once a wild thought passed her mind. Was it this that rendered the haughty noble before her so stern—so more than cold? Formerly he had tried to soothe her—had seemed to look upon the wild love that she indulged for him with compassion, sometimes almost with tenderness; for she was young, beautiful, an orphan—and what was far worse, left alone in the world with a stain upon her birth. All the lofty chivalry of Percy's nature had, at one time, been aroused in her behalf, and until a more engrossing attachment to Anne Boleyn filled his heart, she had occupied more of his thoughts than any other female.

When the heart is filled with intense love of one object, the homage of every other being be-

comes irksome. To a noble nature it seems like flinging strong and coarse flowers among the blossoms which one dear hand has placed upon the heart shrine—that shrine which the pure ideal of every mind erects for a single object only.

The moment Percy became the lover of Anne Boleyn, the passionate devotion of Eleanor Howard became a source of annoyance to him, and it was with regret that he heard of her lengthened sojourn at the home of the Boleyns.

Perhaps his wish to avoid the interview that had been so unceremoniously forced upon him, influenced his conduct in visiting Anne with so much secrecy. No marvel, therefore, that he was startled into something like indignation when this strange girl started up like a spectre in his path, dissipating with the flash of her black eyes the sweet reverie into which he had fallen, and announcing with bitterness the love that had become a part of his existence. There was something of indignant contempt in his feelings, and, for the first time in his life, Lord Percy spoke with harshness to a woman. That she loved him still was sufficiently embarrassing, but that she could have listened craftily to the address of another, and still urge her presence and her jealous bitterness on himself, aroused him to something like resentment.

The infatuated girl yet standing before him in a posture of profound humiliation, mistook the source of his unusual harshness. The insane thought that he might be jealous of Arthur Boleyn took possession of her. This idea sent the blood swiftly through her veins. She lifted her head; the color burned warmly in her cheeks, and her eyes flashed like diamonds through their inky lashes.

"I love him not—oh, Percy, I love him not!" she cried, with a wild and fiery eloquence that startled him by its sudden outbreak—"our blessed lady of heaven knows this heart has ever been faithful to its worship of thee. I would die for thee—only say that thou lovest not this woman—say that as I have dealt with the brother, thou in revenge—"

"Hush," said Percy, forcing her hands from their hold upon his cloak, "for thy own sake say no more. I am not the craven and dishonest gentleman these words hint at. With my whole heart and life I love the lady Anne—for her sake and for thine I can tarry no longer."

Percy had freed his cloak from her grasp, and gathering it hastily around him, he passed her and moved rapidly down the path. She darted after him, paused, flung up her arms and sunk upon the turf.

During full ten minutes the wretched girl

sat upon the ground motionless, and seemed scarcely alive, then she arose, folded her arms, and retraced her way to the hall. Madge Wakefield was waiting for her at the little postern. As she went through Eleanor placed a silver coin in the girl's hand.

"Be secret," she said, "and tell me when the lady Anne goes forth again."



Madge would have spoken, but Eleanor walked on and entered the dwelling. When quite alone in her chamber, she began to pace the floor very slowly and lost in thought. Thus she was occupied till daylight. In all that night vigil she only uttered a single sentence, and that was—"I must wait—revenge can be eaten cold."



## ANNE BOLEYN.

BY MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS.

## CHAPTER III.

"I swear 'tis better to be lowly born,  
And range with humble lovers in content,  
Than be perk'd up in glittering grief  
And wear a golden sorrow."

KING HENRY THE EIGHTH.

THERE was a kingly revel in the palace of old Westminster—that stately pile whose walls had so often resounded to the mirth of Bluff King Henry and his court. A partition had been torn away, throwing the broad, deep hall of audience and the king's bed chamber into one vast room, thus blending the sumptuous furniture of two distinct apartments into one gorgeous scene.

The high ceilings of that which was properly the hall of audience, was surrounded by cornices of carved oak, polished almost to the blackness of ebony, and heavily dashed with gold. The entire walls were hung with tapestry, not allowed to fall loosely from the cornices in the usual fashion, but each compartment fitted into a vast formel or frame of oak, gilded and richly carved, thus taking the effect of so many splendidly wrought pictures set within the wall; for each compartment represented a different subject, and all were glowing fresh and gorgeous as they had just been imported from the nunneries of France. Along the frame work that separated each of the tapestried formels were ranged massive silver sconces, crowded with wax candles that scattered a blaze of light over the glowing walls; the benches of azure and gold ranged along them, and the richly arrayed courtiers that crowded the room, some reposing upon the benches, others dancing to the martial music that burst from an orchestra at the lower end of the hall, and others crowding in groups around the dias on which King Henry sat with his Queen Catharine of Arragon.

A right kingly and noble sight was King Henry and his queen, as they sat in regal state among their courtiers that evening. The dias which they occupied was placed where the partition had been that separated the royal chamber from the lower hall. Below them were the revellers in a blaze of light. Behind was the royal couch clouded with a drapery of crimson and gold, a beaufat piled tier after tier with massive gold plate, and toilet service of the same precious metal, the smaller articles crusted with gems—and three vast ebony chairs, cushioned with purple velvet, all glowing gorgeously, and yet in subdued contrast with the scene so brilliant with life and light lower down the hall. Above

the royal dias there was no light, save that which streamed in, strong at first, then growing fainter and fainter from the canopy that overhung the king.

The bed chamber thus thrown open was just sufficiently illuminated to give it an air of magnificent seclusion, for the canopy under which Henry sat was circled at the top with a crescent of small sconces, linked together with innumerable fine chains of silver. The glow of these sconces was flung back flash after flash from the roofing, which was an entire web of silver lace seamed together with gems, and valanced with a deep fringe of amethyst, emeralds, seed pearls and garnets, all knotted and strung together. The light which penetrated the silver net-work of this resplendant dome fell upon the royal pair, pure and artless as the rays of a full moon; while that which struck upon the fringe of gems took a thousand beautiful tints that played and quivered around them like a rainbow fading from its edges.

There in the prime of his manly beauty, and with his fine countenance as yet unmarked by the brand of blood that made it fearful in after years, sat Henry the Eighth. His under tunic was of cloth of gold blazing with gems, and over it flowed a robe of purple velvet, lined with snow-white ermine, that swept around him in magnificent drapery. Upon his head was a velvet cap, with a single white plume, set a little upon one side, and his beard thick, silky, and of a rich gold color, fell in glossy waves over his ample chest. Catharine was by his side, the cherished wife of his youth, the deserted of his age. A circlet of gems girded her lofty forehead, and a mantilla veil of the richest lace swept like a cloud over the glowing crimson of her robe, and the wealth of jewels that blazed upon her rounded arms and snow-white neck. At thirty-eight Catharine was still a beautiful woman. Her dark eyes were full of intellectual fire, and her noble forehead had expanded in breadth and beauty beneath the crown that had circled it almost from infancy. Every inch a queen, she sat leaning back in her chair of state, and addressing a word now and then to her stately husband, who answered her smiling also, but without turning his eyes from a group of dancers that had occupied his attention half the evening. Standing upon one step of the dias, and half concealed by the king's chair, stood Cardinal Wolsey, his gown of scarlet silk sweeping the splendid foot-cloth, and his massive brow half shaded by the deep brim of the cardinal's hat, which he wore even in the presence.

The Princess Mary, a sweet child of nine

years old, sat in front of her royal parents, her tiny feet half buried in the snowy fur of an ermine rug upon which her stool was placed, and her large, bright eyes wandering over the throng moving before her with a look of grave and child-like wonder.

Crowded around the dias, and gathered in groups down the room, were the nobles of old England. Cardinals and bishops, the representatives of a church soon to be shaken to its foundation by that happy and careless monarch—with the ambassadors of foreign nations, all in their richest vestments. The king, with hearty good will—for at that age he was capable of generous motives—had assembled his court to celebrate the marriage of Anne Boleyn's brother with Eleanor Howard, the beautiful but perverted girl, whom our readers met last in the woods of Norfolk.

When Anne Boleyn took her station at court as maid of honor to the queen, she was accompanied up to London by Sir Thomas and his family. The orphan Eleanor had no other home, and of course came with them. Catharine had been previously interested in the fair Boleyn by Cardinal Wolsey, and it was not long before her favor with the noble queen was sufficient to obtain a subordinate place in the royal household for the orphan. Once an inmate of the palace, and Eleanor possessed genius and craft enough to make her own way to favor not only with her royal mistress, but with Henry himself. Influenced perhaps by the charms of the fair girl who was hereafter to wield such influence in his kingdom, and at that time naturally disposed to kind acts, Henry had placed Arthur Boleyn near his own person, and become so effectually interested in the secret love borne by that young gentleman for the orphan protégée of his queen, that his royal influence was exerted with Sir Thomas in their behalf—and the result was this wedding festival of that evening, where the bridegroom and bride were presented by Henry to his court with every mark of royal kindness and favor.

Catharine, who had granted the orphan bride a dowry, which went far to reconcile Sir Thomas and his haughty child to the match, took a sort of natural pride in the beauty and apparent happiness of her *élève*. There was something in Eleanor's manners, in the meek humility of her address, that won upon the queen's generous nature, and, at the time of her marriage, the young girl had managed to fix herself more firmly in the royal favor than Anne Boleyn herself, with all the fascinations of her beauty and genius.

And now the personages of our story were

grouped in the royal presence. Arthur Boleyn brilliant with such happiness as the young heart knows when its warmest desires are accomplished, was dancing with his bride. In the same set was Percy, scarcely less radiant in his happiness, pacing a measure, with the small hand of Anne Boleyn clasped in his. Near by stood the Duke of Norfolk, Sir Thomas Boleyn, and a young man of low stature, plebeian features, and hair of a dusky red, whose dress, though expensive, was worn in a manner so slovenly and awkward that its very neatness seemed to be rendered vulgar by the person it was intended to adorn. This was Sir Piers Butler, the man to whom Anne Boleyn had been betrothed by her father.

She was moving in the dance, that haughty and beautiful girl, her red lips parted with smiles, and the luxuriant tresses of her hair falling over her shoulders far down upon the robe of purple velvet and jewels that glowed upon her queenly form. In times of excitement Anne's eyes would deepen from their rich violet hue to an intense black, and those who saw her only in public sometimes deemed those large, almond shaped orbs had no other color: now that they were flashing with the exquisite joy of being near the beloved one, a tenderness deep and holy broke over them like mist upon a diamond. The rose just bursting into blossom was not more fresh, more beautiful and joyous looking than Anne Boleyn as she floated along the dance with her thrilling hand enlinked with that of Lord Percy.

All at once she started, the color left her cheek, her limbs lost their graceful elasticity, and she leaned heavily on Percy, still clasping his hand and paused in the dance, breathless and with her eyes fixed upon the ill dressed man who stood by Sir Thomas gazing upon her with a sort of universal admiration in his small, light eyes.

"Percy, my Percy, that man yonder," she said in an agitated whisper, "it is Piers Butler. I have not seen him for years, but it can be no other."

Percy started and turned his eyes upon the stranger. An incredulous smile came to his lips, and pressing her hand he whispered—

"Impossible—impossible! there must be some mistake—this man has not the air of a country noble."

Still Anne kept her eyes upon the man.

"See!" she exclaimed, withdrawing entirely from the dance, "he is speaking with my uncle Norfolk. He looks this way again!"

That instant Sir Thomas Boleyn whispered to the Duke of Norfolk, and they both came toward the terrified girl with Piers Butler between them.

And now it was Lord Percy's turn to be agitated. His eyes flashed, the color came and went on his cheeks, and his voice was unsteady.

"Do not tremble thus, Anne," he said in a low tone—"let him come—they cannot force you to wed him without the king's consent."

"But his consent is already given," replied Anne hastily. "It is his own plan!"

Before Percy could answer, Sir Thomas came up and presented Piers Butler to his affianced bride. Anne was very pale, a look of keen repugnance swept over her face, and she received the homage of this man without relinquishing the support of her lover.

That moment King Henry was looking upon the group. Indeed his eyes had scarcely been turned from Anne Boleyn during the whole evening, something of dissatisfaction there had been in his face, and he ceased to answer the sweet-toned observations that Catharine from time to time addressed to him. Twice a flash of anger came to his eyes when Percy exhibited his devotion to the beautiful girl more openly than he was conscious of himself; and at one time Henry turned sharply to Cardinal Wolsey as if to address him. When Piers Butler moved forward to be presented Henry drew back, and leaning one hand on the arm of his chair as if about to arise, fixed his attention keenly upon the group. He saw the change that came over Anne's face, and the look, half of defiance, half of scorn, that Percy fastened upon the stranger: his own heart beat hurriedly, and the color grew deeper in his already flushed cheeks. Bending eagerly forward he addressed Wolsey.

"Look, my Lord Cardinal, and see if you can make out yonder stranger who is addressing Mistress Boleyn. But that he seems to know his grace of Norfolk, we should marvel at his courage in addressing a lady of such perfect taste as Mistress Anne in that marvelously ill fitting surcoat. Know you these features, my lord?"

Wolsey bent his eyes upon Sir Piers, and after scanning his features for a moment turned to his master again, not a little pleased to learn the distaste which Henry had taken to one whose wooing he had long determined to interrupt.

"That, may it please your highness," said Wolsey, "is Sir Piers Butler, the person whom it has pleased you to command hither, that he may make up a dispute between his house and that of Sir Thomas Boleyn regarding the Wiltshire property, by a marriage with Mistress Anne."

"Ha!" ejaculated King Henry, flinging his portly person back into the chair of state with a violence that made the gold tissue cast over

it rustle again—"I had forgotten this! But it must go no further, we will never see so dainty and sweet a lady given to yonder churl. Why the fellow walks like a horseboy!"

"It will gladden more than one heart to know that your grace thinks thus," replied Wolsey, mounting another step of the dias, and planting himself at the monarch's elbow with a degree of assurance that would have ruined any other man in the kingdom. "Yon fair girl is worthy a more noble mate!"

"By St. George!" cried Henry, turning an animated glance on the fair object of their conversation. "She is worthy to be mated with a king!"

The loud tone in which he spoke aroused the attention of Queen Catharine, she turned her fine eyes upon him with a questioning look and said—

"Of whom speaks my lord?"

The blood gushed over Henry's cheek and temples, for Wolsey had also fixed his black eyes searchingly on his master, and there was something innocent and holy in the half wondering gaze of his wife that abashed the haughty monarch. He forced a laugh and replied in a lower tone.

"See yonder stranger in the brown surcoat, sweet-heart—what say you, shall he wed with your fair serving woman, Mistress Anne Boleyn?"

"The saints forbid!" said Catharine, turning her serious eyes upon the group that had so long occupied her husband's attention: then she exchanged a meaning glance with the cardinal.

Henry laughed. The prompt answer had pleased him well. "See your eminence," he said, addressing Wolsey, "our royal lady decides against this thing; Sir Piers shall never mend his inheritance by wedding the most beautiful lady of our court! Send Sir Thomas hither that we may enlighten him regarding our will in this matter!"

Again Wolsey and the queen exchanged glances.

"My good lord," said Catharine, laying her hand gently on the arm of Henry's state-chair; "this decision against Sir Piers emboldens us to name one who in estate and person is far more worthy of sweet Mistress Anne. Has your highness never remarked how much the Lord Percy effects her company?"

"Ha!" ejaculated the king, with an intonation that made Catharine start in her chair, while Wolsey looked at the king from under his hat with aroused suspicion in his eye.

"Ha! sits the wind in that quarter?" quoth Henry, casting an angry look at Percy, who still



supported Anne Boleyn near the dancers; and drawing haughtily back he rested one hand on the arm of his chair, and watched every movement of the young couple with keen and jealous attention.

Catharine saw that her consort was in no mood to discuss Percy's pretensions to the beautiful maid of honor, and though she had long since pledged herself to intercede with Henry in their behalf, his reception of this first hint on the subject frightened her from proceeding further. The color broke over her cheek a little warmly at this abruptness, for, though rough sometimes to others, he had always been gentle to her. In order to conceal the pain his sharp tone had given, she bent over the little princess and addressed a caressing word to her. The child looked smilingly in her face, and stealing one tiny hand along the folds of her mother's robe, nestled it in the soft, white palm that lay half buried in the glowing crimson. That moment the Duke of Norfolk, accompanied by Sir Thomas Boleyn, advanced up the room in order to present Piers Butler to the monarch. Before they reached the dias Henry started up, and taking Wolsey by the robe, led him into the comparative obscurity of the chamber beyond.

"My Lord Cardinal, I pray you see Sir Thomas Boleyn as early as may be, and tell him that our mind is changed with regard to the match between Piers Butler and his daughter," said the king, with a sort of nervous haste in his voice and manner.

"But the Wiltshire property!" said Wolsey.

"Let Sir Thomas rest content in that. We will ourself see the judges who are to decide the matter. The Boleyns shall suffer no loss though we part with crown lands enough to make up the disputed gear. See to it, Wolsey, that our former consent to this marriage is revoked at once."

Wolsey was shadowed by the bed drapery, near which his royal master had led him, and the quiet smile that stole over his lips was unobserved otherwise. His suspicions regarding the real motives and feelings of the king might have been too apparent. In order to confirm those suspicions, or do away with them entirely, he ventured upon the subject which Queen Catharine had just timidly abandoned.

"It is evident that the lady can command a better match. Any one who has marked her this evening must see that young Percy has become the slave of her rare beauty. If it please your highness that she match in that quarter, the Earl of Northumberland might be brought to consent."

"The Earl of Northumberland—the Lord

Percy," said the king, with angry vehemence. "I tell you he shall not have the sweet lady—she affects him not! I tell you, Wolsey, she affects him not!"

"The queen thinks otherwise!" persisted Wolsey, resolved to fathom the king's secret wishes deeper still.

"The queen! I tell thee Kate knows nothing of the matter," Henry began to say with increased energy, but a glance of light happened to reveal the expression of Wolsey's face, and the monarch checked himself.

"It matters not discussing the question," he added more temperately, while the blood mounted to his temples. "It is our will that both Sir Piers and Lord Percy—if he has presumed to make suit to this lady—withdraw their pretensions at once. We look to you, lord cardinal, that the Lord Percy, who is of your household, does not offend again by his audacious homage in our very presence chamber."

Wolsey bent his head. "I will see that my *élève* conducts himself in conformity to your royal wishes," he said, ready at any time to sacrifice his dearest friend to the caprice of a master, who repaid him so bitterly in after years.

"See to it!" cried Henry, turning pale with rage, for he was looking down the room and saw Anne Boleyn walking toward the dias, leaning with a sort of graceful languor on the arm of Lord Percy, who seemed to be addressing her in a low voice.

"At once," he muttered, turning away, "or the house of Northumberland may lack an heir."

The cardinal did not hear the last words—for Henry strode away as they fell from his lips. But he was startled by the angry tone in which the whole conversation had been carried on, and remained in the shadow musing with himself for some minutes after the king had left him. The subject seemed to give him some anxiety, but after pondering it over in his mind while his countenance resumed its usual serenity.

"It is but a passing fancy," he muttered, "such as gave the good queen a brief season of anxiety regarding this demoiselle's sister Mary. Still it is better that Percy be withdrawn from the court. In truth I had never countenanced the matter but to please her highness. At all events the king must be obeyed!"

After taking this resolution the cardinal left his obscure position, and moved, with his usual grave dignity, toward the dias where Henry was standing, with one foot upon the lower step, while he conversed in a low voice with Sir Thomas Boleyn. As Wolsey came up, Henry withdrew with the baronet to a window, where they talked earnestly for some time.

The cardinal found means to separate Percy from the young maid of honor, for he observed that Henry eyed the pair suspiciously from time to time.

Catharine saw Sir Piers advancing toward his cousin, and kindly beckoned her to sit down upon a step of the dias.

"Be of good cheer," she whispered in a sweet voice, bending toward the lovely girl who had sought shelter from unwelcome homage at her feet. "The king took it somewhat amiss when we ventured to hint a word in favor of poor Percy, but when he is alone, with nothing to chafe his noble spirit, we will urge the subject again—he will not deny his queen the pleasure of making her own maiden happy."

"Ah, how good your grace is!" cried the grateful maiden, and gathering the hem of Catharine's robe in her hand, she pressed her glowing lips upon it.

Shortly after the king came up to the dias, and, without appearing to notice Anne Boleyn, led his wife from the room. She smilingly bade the anxious young creature to follow them with the little princess, hoping to interest the king in her behalf by such acts of personal confidence.

Soon after the reception hall of old Westminster was empty.

#### CHAPTER IV.

IN his parlor of York House sat Cardinal Wolsey, clad in robes of sweeping scarlet, and with his massive brow uncovered. The chair which he occupied was of ebony, and more richly carved than any to be found in the palace of old Westminster, though it had been so long the home of kings. A heavy cord of red silk bound his robe at the waist, and his foot sunk luxuriously into the purple and gold cushion of a stool always placed upon the carpet of rich tapestry convenient for his use. He had been writing, for scrolls of parchment lay on the table at his right hand, some of them glittering with the gold dust with which he dried his manuscript, others tied neatly together with skeins of crimson floss. The standish which had afforded him ink was of massy gold crusted with rubies, and a goblet blazing with jewels, and half full of wine, stood close by. The room was small, but high in the ceiling, and lighted by an arched window, deeply stained. The cornice was a grape vine carved on ebony, with clusters of fruit burnished in gold. Everything was new like the man! The golden arras hanging over the walls and drawn back from the stained window with massive bullion cords; the chairs glittering with gilded leather; the Persian footcloth, all shone and glittered with their first rich gloss.

The very books in their covers of spotless velum, and the articles of plate scattered profusely around, seemed to have passed into that room directly from the polisher and goldsmith.

In the room without were fifty pages, all of noble birth, clad in the cardinal's livery, more than fifty others were scattered through the vast palace, ready to obey the slightest behest of this new man. This son of a butcher, whose father served beef for the kitchens of the very nobles who allowed their sons to bend the knee to him.

This band of youthful nobles formed but a small portion of the eight hundred retainers, all distinguished for birth or talent, that followed in the train of Wolsey.

In a little closet or oratory, from which the arras was partially drawn back, knelt a tall and handsome man in priest's garments. His head was bent before a crucifix of silver elevated upon an altar of black marble, whence it looked down pure and holy, as if in compassion of the gorgeous pride revealed through the lifted drapery. The priest seemed deeply absorbed in his devotions, but when the cardinal spoke his name he started up with a brightened countenance, and came forth into the closet.

Wolsey was leaning back in his seat. One hand, on which there was a faint ink stain, fell over the arm of his chair, the other lay half closed upon the page of manuscript which he had just been writing. His eyes were bent upon the floor, and he seemed lost in a fit of musing. The priest neither moved nor spoke, but stood with his arms folded patiently beneath his robe waiting to be addressed. At length the cardinal raised his head.

"Ah, I remember," he said, after looking at the priest a moment with a sort of half doubt upon his face. "Go into the ante-room and bring hither the young Lord Percy, son to the Earl of Northumberland."

The priest bent his head and left the closet. In a brief space he came back, preceded by Lord Percy.

Wolsey received the young man with a grave smile, but neither arose to greet him nor seemed to expect that he would be seated. The butcher's descendant loved to humble the pride of an earl's son.

"Go to thy prayers again, father Paul," he said, addressing the priest in the bland and courteous tone which he always used to those undoubtedly his inferiors, for it was only to the great that Wolsey was imperious. "Go to thy prayers, and drop the arras that thy devotions may be more profound; nay, draw the inner curtain that we may not disturb thee in thy orisons."

The priest bent his head and withdrew into the oratory, unlooping the arras on his way. The cardinal listened till he heard a second sweep of drapery behind the arras, and then he turned to Lord Percy. The young man was a good deal agitated, for he knew that Wolsey was about to speak of his love suit to Anne Boleyn, and in that, every hope of his soul was ventured.

"My lord," said Wolsey, "you will think no more of the queen's maid of honor, Mistress Anne. The king wills that you cast her from your mind."

For a moment Percy stood mute from surprise, gazing at the cardinal. There was something so indifferent and business-like in his words and manner, that it required an effort for the young man to realize that they were intended to crush the sweetest and dearest hopes of his life. At length he found voice to speak.

"Not think of Mistress Anne more," he said. "Your eminence might as well expect me to stop the pulses of my own heart as cease to think of her."

"It is the king's pleasure," replied Wolsey, in the same quiet but firm tone of voice—"not only that you abandon all suit of Anne Boleyn, but that your contract with Lord Shrewsbury's daughter be at once fulfilled."

"My lord, you know this to be impossible—the king knows it to be impossible—has not our gracious lady, the queen, sanctioned the love I bear her waiting lady? My honor—my life—is pledged to Anne Boleyn—it were perjury in the sight of God were I to wed another," cried Percy, speaking with such energy as a young heart threatened with sudden devastation might well exhibit.

"And think you," said Wolsey, wavering somewhat in his manner—"think you the king and myself are not the best judges of what is due to the honor of a noble, that you withhold submission to our wishes?"

"If it please your grace," said Percy, "I would submit myself wholly to the king and your grace in this matter, were it not one of honor and conscience—one which invokes the happiness of my whole life—of a being dearer to me a thousand times than life."

"This is constancy," cried Wolsey, growing stern and cold from resentment at this unexpected opposition. "Father Paul!"

The priest appeared.

"The Earl of Northumberland should be somewhere without, search for him in the ante-room."

❖The priest withdrew, and Wolsey turned toward the agitated young man.

"If neither the king nor me, thy spiritual adviser can have control over that proud heart, perchance, the old earl, your father, may find some strength in his authority."

"Not here will I meet my father," said Percy firmly. "Even for him I will never break the faith thrice plighted to one who possesses every wish of my heart. She alone can release me from a compact made with my whole soul. I must have time for thought. I must see the lady."

"On your life and honor, I charge you not to see Anne Boleyn again. Go now if you will, but under this interdict," said Wolsey. "I will see your father, and learn of him if the contract privately rushed into by a hot-brained youth can annul the alliance projected by two noble houses years ago. Remember the heirship of Northumberland may be converted to the younger sons at the old earl's pleasure!"

"My father has authority to control that which was to have been my inheritance," said Percy, with feeling—"but the right to redeem my own honor, to love that which is good and beautiful, even he shall not wrest from me."

"Go," said Wolsey, half rising from his chair, "it is not in this spirit that you should meet the old earl—we will ourselves discuss the matter with him. A night's reflection may bring that proud heart to a sense of duty, nay, it must," and with a haughty wave of the hand Wolsey dismissed the unhappy noble just before Paul entered another door, followed by the old Earl of Northumberland.

The two remained together more than an hour, and when the earl went forth he passed by his son in the gallery without addressing a word to him, though they had not met in several weeks.

At this very time Anne Boleyn was on her knees before the queen: her eyes were flushed with weeping, and her limbs shook with grief as she clung to Catharine's robe.

"Alas! I cannot give him up—my very soul is woven to his," she said, lifting her tearful face with a look of passionate grief to the benign features of her royal mistress.

"Why should his majesty thus interpose his authority between two beings that have no hope or joy save in each other?"

"You should not rave thus—nor speak harshly of that which the king wills," said Catharine, with a calm dignity, and yet there was true womanly compassion in her tone. "Has he not released you from that which seemed most dreadful, your engagement with Sir Piers Butler? Has he not promised honors to your father—advancement to your only brother? My poor maiden, learn to look more calmly on the matter. I, who have



been eighteen years the wife of his bosom, never questioned my Henry's will thus!"

"It is not his will that I question, but that of one who has neither love, honor, nor honesty," cried Anne with imprudent warmth. "This is the work of Cardinal Wolsey; I saw his cold eyes upon me last night at the revel!"

"Hush, poor child—hush," said Catharine, with wonderful forbearance, for Anne's passionate grief made her forgetful of the respect due that noble woman. "I cannot hear the cardinal thus spoken of—take heart! our influence has ever been great with the king."

Anne looked up, and a smile broke through her tears. She was naturally of a hopeful disposition—she kissed the queen's hand—she gathered the folds of her robe between her trembling palms and pressed them again and again to her lips with an overflow of grateful love that was scarcely less than devotion. Then she arose, clasped her hands, and lifting her beautiful eyes to heaven, said in a deep and earnest voice—

"May the sweet lady of heaven bless thee, most royal lady—and bless me only as I prove thy grateful and true servant."

Catharine smiled, and tears started to her mild, dark eyes. Touched to the heart by these grateful words, she took Anne's hands between both of hers, and—as the girl sunk to her knees again—pressed a kiss upon her forehead. It was not often that Catharine allowed such tender feminine feelings to overcome her dignity. But to see herself thus beloved was sweet, and Catharine of Arragon pressed her lips upon the brow of Anne Boleyn before the doomed maiden went forth to work ruin to both.

When Anne entered her chamber she found Eleanor, her brother's wife, sitting by the window waiting for her. The poor girl was new to grief, and her heart panted for sympathy—she sat down by the bride and unfolded her heart, its sufferings, and its wishes.

"I will see him," she said, "spite of Wolsey—spite of the king—they cannot force him to wed another. See, here is the letter that his page gave me as I come along. He will reject the Lady Mary Talbot even at the altar—does he not swear it?"

Eleanor read the billet attentively, her lip quivered a little, and her cheeks burned, while Anne blessed her for these marks of sympathy. After she had searched that warm and passionate heart to its depths, the bride went out, uttering protestations of sisterly love.

That night Eleanor met the king as he came in from the chase. He paused to speak with her, for there was something in her dark eye

that seemed to plead for attention. They conversed together several moments, and at parting Henry took a jewel from his finger and forced it on her acceptance.

The next day Anne Boleyn was dismissed from the queen's service, and sent down to Hever Castle, accompanied by her father. She did not see Percy again—and the letter which she left in charge of her brother's wife, passed with all its poetry of passion and love into the hands of King Henry. TO BE CONTINUED.



## ANNE BOLEYN.

BY MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS.

## CHAPTER IV.

AND NOW she was alone, the sweet, wayward Anne Boleyn—left to nourish her fancies and her love in the beautiful wilds that surrounded her father's castle in Kent. It was a contrast calculated to wear upon a heart restive and passionate as hers, this deep solitude, this still, uneventful country life compared thus abruptly with the bustle, glitter, and flatteries of Henry's court. At first this was not so. Her heart was full of Percy, full of confidence in his love, and in his strength of character. And she had a friend at court, the most powerful, the most kind. Had not Catharine herself promised that her union with Percy should yet take place, and with the king's consent? Catharine never broke her word.

So Anne Boleyn was not unhappy in her banishment. The country was very beautiful, for it was in the sweet prime of summer, and a genial season had given unusual luxuriance and depth of color to the scenery around Hever Castle, and this gratified her poetical imagination more deeply than the false magnificence of all Henry's court had ever done. Her warm heart was cast into pleasant shadow, as it were, by the love that filled it, and all the sweet things of nature tranquilized and gave earnestness to a passion that had hitherto been nourished too much upon excitement. There existed comparatively but few books in those days, and though Anne's taste and genius led her to solitary pursuits almost unknown to the age, she neglected even the fine volumes that were in her possession. She loved to wander off into the beautiful solitude and think. The soft stream that gurgled and sung with the pebbles in its bed, the wild flowers bathing in its clear wave—the hazle bushes bending with green nuts, and the tall trees over head were as books of poetry to her. For three weeks she led a life of pure and delicious reverie. She lived in the woods, and fed upon the delicate fancies of her own glowing heart. Her very thoughts were poetry—her life a calm, holy dream. Her soul was tranquilized by the deep affections that had started up and flourished there like blossoms in a rich soil; the very intensity of her love for Percy rendered her secure. The idea that all these sweet well springs of hope could be broken up seemed so terrible that she could not even for an instant encourage the thought to enter her mind. The doubt that Percy could be induced to give her up—that never entered her imagination. She

knew that he loved her, and was not that enough!

Ah, how true and beautiful were these lovely manifestations of Anne Boleyn's nature at this time. She had no ambition—the creature so ambitious afterward. She never thought of Percy's fortune, or of his rank, it was above hers, and yet she cared nothing about the matter. But she thought of him day and night, she wondered where he was, if he ever doubted her faith, and how she would smile at the absurdity of such fancies—if he thought of her in that hot-bed court—that "cloth of God's atmosphere"—as she thought of him in the cool woods, while the soft leaves seemed whispering his name over head. And so, for three weeks, Anne Boleyn lived in a beautiful dream. They were the happiest three weeks of her life. After that her sister-in-law came down to Hever Castle. It seemed as if a serpent had crept into the bed of roses on which the young enthusiast had been sleeping so sweetly; from that time Anne became restless. Why had Percy remained away from her so long? He was at court free to go or come, so that sister-in-law said.

And what had Eleanor, the bride, been doing while Anne enjoyed her tranquil life at Hever Castle? Why had she left her husband to join his sister in that calm solitude?—was she too in love with nature? Did she come down to indulge in soft reveries of the man to whom she had just given herself? Alas—alas, the serpent when he trailed his slimy and glittering coils through the flowers of paradise, came with an object more pure than that for which this bride—so beautiful and so vile yet—was laboring.

Already had this fair young wife struck a pang to the heart of her noble husband—already had her name been whispered in the court with meaning smiles and expressive glances—those things that fall upon female reputation, like mildew upon a flower, staining it forever, and yet no one can tell whence or how the blight comes! Eleanor had been seen much with the king after her marriage. Twice she was detected coming from his closet stealthily, and as if fearful of being observed. They had ridden away from the hunt in company more than once, and the courtiers found them sitting on their horses beneath some spreading oak in deep conversation. At one time, the monarch and the bride lingered together in this position a whole hour. A huntsman stationed in a thicket near by, in order to turn the stag, watched them all the time. There was nothing of gallantry in Henry's manner, nothing of coquetry in hers—they conversed together earnestly, and as persons absorbed in no common object.



All these things gave rise to scandal in the court: such scandal as smiles and shrugs can put in circulation. The young husband at length became aware of the effects of this singular intimacy between his bride and the king. The result was that she went down to Hever Castle by his desire, the very course she had intended to pursue. His duties at court must be performed, and so the two young women were left together. Alone, except the household, for Sir Thomas Boleyn had been detained in London.

On the third day after Eleanor's arrival, the two young ladies had sauntered out together, taking a wooded path that led to a hamlet some half mile distant from the castle.

Eleanor had proposed to go forth, for it was near the sunset hour. The summer air was balmy with fragrance. The light summer clouds that had been floating over the sky all that calm day, were now taking a soft rose tinge, while their edges toward the west gleamed with pale gold. That mellow, purplish haze that deepens with the sun's decline, was already setting among the giant trees, and the wild flowers seemed falling to sleep in the turf over which they trod. It was a still, beautiful hour, but Anne Boleyn came forth to enjoy it with a reluctant and languid step. The few last days had found her dispirited and anxious. Eleanor had talked of Percy, of his position with the king, of the violent opposition to their union made both by the cardinal and Percy's father, the old Earl of Northumberland.

These topics, the doubts of her lover's constancy so repeatedly expressed by her sister-in-law, had their effect upon Anne's spirits. Percy had never written a line to her. She had only heard of him indirectly since her removal from court. These reflections rendered the hitherto confiding girl miserable. Her high spirit bowed with resentment against those who sought to separate her from her lover. She had not yet begun to doubt *him*, but that pang was now to kindle the fervor of her spirit.

They were walking together, as I have said, in the soft twilight. Eleanor had twined her arm around Anne's waist, and the silken folds of their robes, crimson and blue, contrasted richly together as they swept the thick turf. Anne's cheek was pale, and her step languid. Her spirits, naturally so fresh and sparkling, were terribly depressed, and she looked around upon the beautiful scenery with a heavy eye.

Eleanor was pale also; but hers was not the dull, heavy oppression of protracted care, casting a pallor upon the countenance. It was the whiteness that keen excitement gives the cheek,

while it kindles the eye and expands the forehead. She evidently strove to conquer the emotion that must have manifested itself to any one not pre-occupied with her own thoughts like the anxious young creature, around whose aching heart her arm was circling.

"Let not what I said this morning depress you thus, sweet sister," said the wily young creature, after casting a sharp glance over the scenery, and especially toward a hill at their left, around which a high road crept down to a wilderness of oaks which they were approaching. "It is true Lord Shrewsbury has brought his heiress to court, and Percy is often seen there in her company, but this may be only to temporize."

"Percy would *not* temporize: he is not one to use subterfuge!" cried Anne, and there was keen anguish in her voice. "He will take no half measures, but will act either *right* or *wrong* fearlessly."

"Then, perchance," said Eleanor, "he has yielded to the commands of the king, for surely I saw him not a week since in close conversation with the Lady Mary Talbot."

"And he has not written to me since I left the court!" said the poor girl inly—and tears started to her eyes, but she would not allow any one, even a sister, to witness her humiliation, for such Percy's conduct seemed to her sensitive heart. Conquering the bitter emotions that were almost choking her, she said with apparent calmness—"this all may be, but until Percy tells me with his own lips that he has proved traitor to the faith pledged to me—how solemnly you can hardly guess—Eleanor until his lips seal the treason of his heart, I will believe no ill of him."

"Not," said Eleanor, pausing as if reluctant to utter the painful truth that lingered on her lips—"not if he had danced with the Lady Mary—hunted with his hand upon her bridle rein—visited her father's mansion every day. Would not the certainty of acts like these shake your faith in his constancy?"

"And who asserts that these things are true?" cried the tortured girl, flinging off her companion's arm, and turning upon her like a gazelle when the arrow pierces it. "Who dares to say this of Henry Percy?"

"Nay, if you look at me thus," said Eleanor, "I have no more to say; the bearer of unpleasant news is sure to be reviled, as if anger could change the truth."

"Sister—sister, is this true?" cried Anne, in a tone of agony that made the person thus interrogated turn pale, for Anne laid her trembling hand on each shoulder, and pushing Eleanor a



pace from her, looked keenly in her face, though tears were in her own eyes, trembling there like water among the fires of a diamond. "Is this true? Did you, with your own eyes, see Henry Percy—my Henry, thus associated with Lord Shrewsbury's heiress?"

Cool, crafty, false as Eleanor was, she could not brave the searching question of those dark eyes, for intense feeling had turned them black as midnight. In spite of her efforts to appear unconcerned a dusky red settled around her own eyes—the lids dropped over them, and they sunk abashed to the earth, but it was only her eye that quailed. The false lip was true to the base heart.

"I did see him with my own eyes, thus associated with Lord Shrewsbury's heiress!" she said in a voice that was intended to express wounded feeling.

An instant Anne stood with her hands pressed upon those shrinking shoulders, for the traitress could not choose but recoil as the falsehood left her heart. At first her hands trembled, then they became firm and fell downward.

"I do not believe it," was the low and steady words that fell from Anne Boleyn's lips, and without another word she passed on, leaving Eleanor petrified and astounded. For the moment her self-possession was utterly gone.

Anne had moved forward several yards before Eleanor could compose herself enough to decide how to act. Then she moved quickly forward again, stole her arm around Anne's waist, and said in the sweetest and most natural accents of wounded affection.

"You are excited, Anne: unhappiness and suspense have fretted your temper, or you would not wound the sister that loves you so with such harsh unbelief!"

"I am unhappy—suspicious, miserable," cried Anne, bursting into a passion of tears. "The sweet lady of heaven only knows how miserable!"

She looked up—started, dashed the tears from her eyes, and uttered a shriek that was almost a shout. She had seen a horseman coming over the opposite hill. She knew him in an instant. It was Lord Henry Percy. Hence the cry of wild joy that broke from her heart.

And now the poor girl grew faint. Her limbs shook, and Eleanor felt the heart against her own beating like a young eagle frightened in its nest.

"He is come—he is here, Eleanor, to gainsay that which you have told me!" she cried, while her wet cheek grew bright, and her eyes sparkled. "Here is here—is not that enough?"

Eleanor was pale as marble. The sight of Lord Percy seemed to have frightened away her

faculties. She allowed Anne to escape from her arm like a bird taking wing, and saw her dart forward along the path they were pursuing, till she was lost in the wood that stretched between the place where she stood and the hill which the horseman was descending.

"What can I do? If they meet before *he* comes all is lost," she cried, growing more and more excited as the horseman seemed to hasten his speed. That instant she saw another horseman lower down the hill, and just entering the skirts of the wood; a bend of the road had concealed him till then. The purple twilight was gathering thick around the traveller, but Eleanor knew him well. The color flew back to her face, and she laughed.

"He is here—he is ahead—they will meet first," she exclaimed unconsciously quite aloud. "Chance has arranged it better than I could have done, still I must not trust to chance."

Ascertaining the position of the horseman by another rapid glance, she raised an instant, and then struck into a neighboring path that led through the woods by a far shorter route than that which Anne had taken.

Breathless with delight, and wild as a bird returning to the nest from which it has been frightened, Anne Boleyn pursued her course along the forest path which intersected the highway just where the woods grew thickest in the rich soil. A small rivalet wound along the foot of the hill, and crossed the highway in a little dell overhung by dense oaks, through which the sun never came, even in the warmest day. Before Anne approached this spot the twilight had deepened in the foliage till it seemed almost like night. But she heeded it not. The sound of an approaching hoof fall, the knowledge that every sound brought her nearer to the beloved one, filled her whole being.

She had not reached the brooklet before a horseman emerged from the branches that overhung his path. He saw her, touched his horse with the spur, and it cleared the brook with a leap. A single bound brought him almost to her side. She saw him spring from the saddle. He was coming toward her. She had faltered a moment, but now her heart was full, her eyes dim with happy tears. She sprang forward and was clasped to his bosom.

Why was it that a thrill almost of disgust shot through the frame of that young creature? There was no word, no breath to cause it. But she was scarcely folded to the bosom on which she had cast herself when she struggled with a cold shudder to free herself from the arms that only sought to restrain her when she attempted to withdraw her form from their embrace.

But she was like a child in those strong arms. They girded her closer and closer, and a burning kiss was pressed upon her face.

Those were not Percy's lips. They had never met her brow with a touch so rude. Awed by respect, and rendered timid by the purity of true love, his lips had ever touched the snow of her forehead gently as the wind when it ruffles a water lily. She shrieked in absolute terror as that kiss fell upon her forehead, but her cry was smothered amid the lace and jewels of a strange bosom, and a voice that was not Percy's attempted to soothe her.

The sound of that voice gave an agony of strength to the young girl. She broke from him and staggered back, thrusting out her small shivering hands to keep him away. She trembled from head to foot, and her face was pale with affright, save one spot of burning red that glowed near the soft temple.

"The king!—the king!" was all her bewildered lips could utter.

Her voice of dismay so absolute, and the look of terror with which she shrunk back pace after pace as he advanced, threw even the bluff King Henry into confusion. He stood irresolute.

"Nay, sweetheart, this coldness, this repulse after walking so far to meet a guest who should not be unwelcome at Hever Castle seems a useless caprice. I saw you coming. Such kindness gave me brighter hopes," he said with a sort of awkward gallantry, for rough and pampered as he was, Henry could not flatter himself that the young creature who stood trembling before him with that look of wild astonishment in her eyes, was acting a part. He saw that her surprise, her repugnance was genuine, and it was this conviction that absorbed even his audacious spirit.

"My lord, my liege," stammered the young girl, casting a wild look around, as if hoping that some one would appear to shield her from his presence. "I was taken by surprise—I thought—I expected—I—I——"

A burning blush, visible even in the dim light, spread over her face and bosom. She faltered, covered her face with both hands, and seemed to shrink into half her size. How could she explain her conduct?—how acknowledge before the haughty monarch, who had power to grind her to the earth for the least disobedience of his orders, that she had mistaken him for another? and that other the very man whom he had forbidden her to see or think of again.

She stood before him cowering with shame, a blush burning over her from head to foot, and big tears flashing through her slender fringes to the earth.

"You thought, you supposed," said Henry, regarding her with one of those stern looks that make a blue eye in its anger so fiercely expressive.

"Fair mistress, if it was not Henry Tudor whom you came from Hever Castle to welcome—and whom you greeted with a warmth and kindness that made him forgetful of all cold forms of ceremony—if it was not the king to whom Mistress Anne rendered up her sweet lips——"

"No—no, I did not—I did not," cried the distressed young creature, interrupting him in an agony of bitter shame. "Have mercy upon me—be generous, great king—I am humbled to the dust by what has passed—let me return home—I am ill—very ill!"

Anne sunk upon her knees, for she had no power to stand: her forehead was almost bowed to the turf, and she drooped more and more forward, as if about to faint.

But the jealous spirit of King Henry was aroused. Her great distress only served to inflame it.

"Can it be—was it the stripling Harry Percy for whom a greeting so much warmer than his king might hope for, was intended?" he inquired sternly. "Speak, fair mistress, the king would know if his orders are trifled with! Has Harry Percy been at Hever Castle?"

"No, on my life—on my honor, no!" cried Anne, lifting her head and speaking with passionate earnestness.

Henry saw that she spoke the truth, but his jealous suspicions were not entirely dissipated: her astonishment, her look of repugnance on recognizing him, had been too natural for any self-deception on his part. Pampered as his vanity had been from the cradle, he could not delude himself into a belief that a maiden so beautiful and so proud could have met him unexpected and unannounced as he came, with such manifestations of tenderness. She had certainly mistaken him for some other person. But if this person were not the rival from whom his own power had separated her, who could it be?

As these thoughts flashed through his mind, Henry stood before the trembling girl gazing down upon her, his face changing every instant, now with jealous doubt, now with admiration of her beauty, for she had half risen, and with one knee pressed upon the turf, remained motionless; her eyes drooping beneath their snowy lids, and the crimson fading softly from her neck and forehead. It was too dark for Henry to see all this, but every line of her lovely person was replete with a grace so exquisite that the purple twilight only rendered it more enchanting, like

the atmosphere which some of the old masters fling around their female figures in a picture. She lifted her eyes at last, for his silence terrified her afresh.

Henry was a coarse man, material, if the expression may be allowed, both in mind and body, but intellect and a most perfect appreciation of the beautiful existed in his nature like blush roses buried in the unseemly and rank weeds of a garden. He could appreciate refinement in another, and the want of it was a fault not to be forgiven with him. Was it strange then that the expression of that violet eye, so full of shame, terror and supplication, should have softened even his rough heart.

"Rise! Mistress Anne," he said, with a gentleness that rendered his voice—always rich and mellow—peculiarly encouraging. "Rise, sweet lady: it is not for beauty like yours to grovel at Harry Tudor's feet. There, that is right; shake off that pretty look of terror—though, efaith, it becomes you much."

She stood up, but would not take the hand which Henry extended to aid her in rising. He noticed this, and again his fiery nature would have broken forth, but her eyes were turned full upon him with a look of proud resentment, and once more he attempted to soothe her by gentle words that were more than half belied by an air of imperious command, that no effort of his could conceal or even subdue.

"Have done with all this anger, sweetheart," he said, taking her hand in spite of her evident reluctance. "The king's lip honors where it touches." Anne drew back with an indignant gesture; she was beginning to feel her strength and courage revive, her first impulse was to turn and flee along the path which led to the castle. Perhaps she might have done so notwithstanding the king had declared himself her guest, but as she turned to go he seized her hand and grasped it hard, at first in anger, then he pressed it to his lips, but without releasing his clasp upon the slender fingers.

And now Anne Boleyn's proud spirit rose high within her, she attempted to withdraw her hand, but finding that beyond her power, turned her large eyes full upon the monarch, who, presuming on his station, had thus dared to force unwelcome homage upon her.

"My liege, if it so please you, let go my poor hand," she said with proud composure, in strong contrast with her previous demeanor. "As my father's guest, the monarch of England is welcome to my father's castle, but save in such courteous greeting as all strangers are entitled to, shall no man living retain Anne Boleyn's hand. I pray you release me, mighty sir."

Even Henry's air of lofty command was not more imposing than that of Anne Boleyn as she uttered these words. Still he did not yield to it, but stood gazing upon the spirited beauty of her face, enchanted even by the resentment that was directed against himself. He seemed to take a pleasure in kindling her warm and excitable nature, for instead of relinquishing her hand he pressed it again forcibly to his lips.

She ceased to struggle, and turned her eyes full upon him. A smile of irrepressible scorn curled the coral beauty of her lip.

"Is it only to prove his strength upon a helpless maiden that the monarch of England visits Hever Castle?" she said.

Henry dropped her hand, and a flash of shame deepened the ruddy color of his cheek.

"Will it please your grace to move forward," said Anne, looking coldly upon the hand that was crimson with the pressure of his strong fingers. "My father is absent, but expected home every moment!"

"And was it him—was it Sir Thomas you came forth to meet?" exclaimed the king. "I would give half my kingdom to think so!"

Anne Boleyn was not perfect, spite of her proud bearing she was depressed by a keen sense of shame. Her impetuous feelings had hurried her into an act which she had no power to palliate or explain, above all persons, to the king. She could not tell the truth without exciting his wrath against herself—that she could have endured—but against Percy, on whom it might fall even to the sacrifice of life. When Henry himself presented an excuse which promised to redeem her wounded delicacy and her love at once, she scarcely paused to think, but answered in a low voice.

"Great king, you have judged agright, I did expect my father—I—I——"

She paused, faltered, and could not go on, a pang of real self-degradation shot to her heart, and her face grew pale. The feelings that she endured were far too painful for blushes. The falsehood lay in her heart, not upon her cheek. To secure that stern monarch's respect she had sacrificed her own—oh, how unmeasurable the difference! A possibility existed that the truth might have redeemed her with him. But where was the excuse that she could offer to her soul for the first falsehood written upon its pure surface?

Again King Henry attempted to take her hand; his bright eyes sparkled with pleasure, and his full lips were turbulent with smiles.

"Is this true, gentle sweetheart? Nay, we were neither king nor gentleman to question it. St. George! but Sir Thomas shall have substan-

tial cause of thanks that his king has cheated him of the sweetest moment ever known to a monarch's life. For the one moment in which that blushing face was on Harry Tudor's bosom, beauteous Anne, your father shall be made a peer of the realm."

Anne shrunk back—had her falsehood borne this rich fruit already? She felt that it was entangling her in a thousand glittering links, which she would soon have no power to rend apart. She glanced at the king—his face was flushed and animated with pleasure, more terrible to her startled imagination than his blackest frown had been.

"Will it please your grace to proceed: the castle is yet half a mile distant, and night drawing on."

Henry smiled, stepped to look to the rivulet where his horse was cropping the rich turf: he disentangled the bridle rein of polished leather, heavy with gold embossments, from beneath the animal's hoofs, and throwing it over his arm, approached Anne again. His good humor was completely restored, and though Anne refused to take his disengaged arm, and walked gravely by his side, he exhibited no further manifestation of resentment, but strove with all his animated powers of pleasing—which few men possessed in greater perfection—to soothe and conciliate the proud beauty.

They had just emerged from the wood, and were entering an avenue that led to the castle when Eleanor came suddenly upon them. Her demeanor was strangely excited, fire flashed in her dark eyes, and a disagreeable expression, partly triumphant, partly malicious, now and then shot across her pale features. Had Anne been less painfully occupied she would have noticed that Eleanor exhibited none of those signs of surprise or discomposure which the sudden appearance of their kingly guest might reasonably have occasioned. She received Henry's greeting with a sort of shy restraint—bent her knee as if to render the usual homage, and when he graciously reached forth a hand to prevent the act, she lifted her eyes to his with an expression that must have placed Anne Boleyn on her guard had she been looking that way.

But now that the first excitement of meeting the king was over, Anne began to suffer from a keen sense of disappointment. She had been so confident that the horseman upon the hill was Lord Percy, that even now, when the king was by her side, she could hardly convince herself of the truth. Occupied with these thoughts, she scarcely heeded what was passing between Henry and her sister-in-law, but walked on silent and most unhappy. She had expected

Sir Thomas for several days, and her eyes were cast anxiously back more than once, in hopes that he might appear and relieve her from all the embarrassments that Henry's sudden arrival had brought. Thus anxious and miserable, Anne Boleyn entered the castle with her monarch visitor.

Since Eleanor's marriage with the heir of Hever Castle, she had taken upon herself much of the authority in Sir Thomas' household hitherto exercised by Anne Boleyn. Henry had expressed a desire to remain unknown during his visit, and it was by her arrangement that a repast, hastily prepared, but profuse with all the delicacies known at the castle, was served up late that evening in Anne's bower-room.

Anne had introduced a thousand graceful niceties, learned at the French court, into her father's household, and it was a relief when she could make her arrangements for the repast intended for her royal guest an excuse for leaving him. Thus, without the slightest effort, Eleanor and the king had several hours of private conversation before the delicious little supper was served up.

In everything Henry the Eighth was a sensualist and an epicure, it did not, therefore, detract from his enjoyment when that monarch sunk into a large velvet chair usually occupied by Anne Boleyn, and took his place at a little table crowded with trays of filagree silver, some brimming over with apricots and golden apples buried in wild flowers, others full of fresh nuts, all glowing richly among goblets of chased gold, fretted with jewels—tankards of the same precious metal, and the most beautiful silver plate, on which lay choice game of every description, exquisitely prepared, snow white bread, and that rare delicacy, a fresh salad, scarcely known in England beyond the royal table.

It would have been difficult for Henry to have separated the most refined feeling of his soul from some sensual desire. Notwithstanding the violent passion that had brought him to Hever Castle, his appetite was marvelously good. His eye brightened as the covers were removed, allowing the rich savor of the dishes to ascend—not too powerfully—to his dilating nostrils. His lips grew more and more crimson with every draught of wine, and he toyed with the mellow apricots as they lay in the basket at his elbow, pressing his large, white fingers on their crimson cheeks, and sinking them deeper among the flowers long after his hunger had been satiated.

All this time Anne sat by his side, now pale with anxiety, now flushed with confusion, for his expressions of admiration took a more bold



and ardent tone from the wine he had drank. Eleanor sat at her end of the table, busy with a plate of fruit, and seemingly quite unconscious of those expressions that brought the blood so hotly into Anne Boleyn's cheek. After awhile she arose and glided from the room, bending her knee for an instant before the king, and murmuring in a low voice that she would return instantly. Anne cast an imploring glance after her. The light was centered over the table, but the astonished girl fancied that a smile hung mockingly on those beautiful lips as Eleanor passed out.

The moment they were alone, Henry wheeled his chair around and drew it close to the tapestry covered stool which Anne occupied. She had been growing paler and more anxious every moment, longing to follow her sister, but not daring to leave the king alone. She felt that Henry's eyes were upon her, and taking some of the blossoms from a fruit tray, bent her face over them to avoid his look. When he half arose and drew his chair nearer she found it impossible to repress her feelings, but started up dropping the blossoms over Henry's garments, and drew back into the recess of a window.

"Why do you avoid me thus, sweet mistress?" said the king. "Why withhold the courtesies to Henry Tudor which you would not grudge to the meanest guest at your father's castle? Is it because you see that which he has no longer the wish or power to conceal?—that he loves you better than his life, his kingdom!—better than his own soul!"

"Noble king," said Anne, with more than the dignity of a queen, "are these words said in the excitement which wine lends? If so I will forgive them, though offered to a daughter under the shelter of her father's roof. But I pray you degrade not your princely person by repeating them!"

"And wherefore not?" said Henry. "Is not the king's love a subject's glory? Why should Henry alone be deprived the privilege of admiring beauty, and adoring the sweet properties of mind which he finds here!"

"My lord I cannot listen to words like these—they wound—they humble me! An honorable name and a pure heart are all the dower I can ever bring a husband. I would rather die than lose them!"

"Nay, sweet Anne, reflect a little, and deal more gently with one who loves you so much that it would be his death to give up all hope," cried the king, growing more and more audacious now that Anne's proud and indignant air assured him that he was fully committed with her.

"Hope! mighty king! I do not understand how you can retain a shadow of hope," cried Anne, her beautiful form dilating, her eyes on fire, and her sweet lips proudly arched. "Your wife I cannot be!—my own unworthiness of the high honor forbids it. You have a queen already!—to me, therefore, words of love are but shame and insult!"

"Think not so, sweet imp. The king's love can neither bring insult or shame to its object. Nay, spite of this hot anger, I will not be repulsed."

"Sire," said Anne Boleyn, drawing proudly toward the door—"you are my father's guest, and I dare not say how cruel, how base all this seems to me. But once again I declare from the depths of my soul, these expressions of love are odious to me. I would rather perish at your feet than listen to them again!"

"Sweet tyrant—beautiful Anne, part not from me in this fierce anger!" pleaded Henry, following the indignant young creature to the door, and laying his jeweled hand upon the latch to prevent her egress. "Will nothing shake this proud resolution?"

"Nothing, great king—therefore I pray you let me pass."

"I can load your father with honors——"

"By loading his daughter with dishonor!" cried Anne, interrupting him with a burst of irrepressible scorn. "Take your grace's hand from the latch, I will pass through."

Henry drew his hand reluctantly from the latch, for the poor girl was trembling from head to foot with excitement, and he saw that nothing short of personal force could keep her in his presence another moment.

Anne opened the door and went out, leaving the royal suitor in a most unenviable state of mortification and disappointment. Still he was not thoroughly displeased, for, though unprincipled himself, he possessed a keen sense even of moral beauty, and there was something in Anne Boleyn's lofty scorn that excited a degree of respect for her character that deprived the repulse he had met of half its bitterness.

During the few hours which Henry spent at Hever Castle the next day, Anne refused to appear before him. He sent message after message by her sister-in-law. He wrote billets full of passionate entreaty, but all to no effect. She would not leave her chamber for a moment, and he rode from the castle about noon, baffled and angry, but more desperately in love than ever.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## ANNE BOLEYN.\*

BY MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS.

## CHAPTER V.

"Like a clankless chain entralling—  
Like the sleepless dreams that mock—  
Like the frigid ice-drops falling  
From the surf-surrounded rock.

Such the cold and sickening feeling  
Those hast caused this heart to know,  
Stabbed the deeper by concealing  
From the world its bitter woe." BYRON.

It was Lord Percy whom Anne Boleyn had seen upon the hill when she left her sister so precipitately. He had broken away from the bondage of the cardinal, from the control of his haughty father, and privately left London, determined to seek an interview with the lady of his love, and flee with her into France if no other way presented itself of eluding the lord cardinal's arbitrary command never to see her again. Another feeling strong as love itself had urged the impetuous young man forward to this step. A letter had reached him, from some unknown person, conveying dark insinuations of the king's attachment to Anne Boleyn, and pointing this out as a reason for his stern prohibition to her marriage with himself, and for her prompt retirement from the court.

Percy was of a confiding, generous nature, but passionate and full of warm impulses. He did not, for a moment, credit the subtle hint that Anne favored the king's dishonorable suit, and had retired from court to avoid the scrutiny of her betrothed husband, but the very idea that her name could be coupled with that of the king even by one individual, galled his haughty spirit beyond endurance. The profound silence maintained by Anne since her departure from court, also filled his heart with vague misgivings. Neither message nor letter had reached him.

While Percy was laboring under the painful doubts created by this letter, two events transpired to excite these feelings beyond endurance. Lord Shrewsbury's daughter arrived at the court, and the king left suddenly privately, taking only a few followers with him, and telling no one—not even the queen—where his journey tended.

At this time another letter reached Percy, stating that King Henry had gone down to Kent by Anne Boleyn's invitation. That he would ostensibly visit a nobleman whose residence lay some twenty miles from Hever Castle, where his

retainers might remain while he made private excursions to the lady's bower.

How accurately Eleanor had calculated upon his movements when she sent that anonymous letter, was proved by his appearance in Kent, and in sight of Hever Castle on the day and hour that King Henry approached it for the first time unattended and alone, like his subject.

A bend in the road had concealed the royal horseman, and in truth Percy's heart beat so tumultuously at the sight of the tower that sheltered the beloved girl for whom he was ready to sacrifice so much, that he had no thought for any other object. Even the figures of Anne Boleyn and her sister as they moved down the opposite eminence, escaped him. So he rode on, rather slowly, for his horse was tired, and the roads, at that period, none of the best. After descending the hill the highway ran along its foot for some little distance, trodden over the margin of the forest rivulet, which we have mentioned before, as separating the base of the hill from the timber land that lay between it and the castle. After threading its banks for perhaps the eighth of a mile, the road crossed the brook in a shallow part and cut through the dense trees up the neighboring eminence. Percy came upon the brook where its waters were narrow and deep, foaming through a bed of broken rocks that only allowed them to flash up to sight here and there in merry sparkles. The young noble was using both hand and spur to compel his horse from an obstinate determination which it had formed to drink in this tempting place, when he caught a gleam of female garments coming through the trees. His cheeks flushed with eager expectation, and his heart beat quick. The horse took advantage of his opportunity, and turning suddenly plunged one foot up to the knee in the limpid waters, which he began to inhale with a gurgling and luxurious sound, while his master bent forward on the saddle, and holding his breath, strove to obtain a distinct view of the approaching female.

The dusk was gathering around him, and though the gorgeous colors in which the female was arrayed, rendered her approach visible by a contrast with the deep green of the forest, she advanced within a few yards of the brook before he could distinguish her features. The moment his eager glance fell upon her face he drew back in the saddle with a look of keen disappointment. Forcing his horse back from the limpid draught that it was enjoying so greedily, he remained upon the bank till the lady, who approached slowly, and with her eyes bent on the earth, paused upon the opposite shore as if checked alike in her progress and her reverie by the

\* Secured according to act of Congress, in 1846, by Edward Stephens, in the clerk's office of the southern district of New York.

rushing waters. She turned her dark eyes up the brook, and when they rested on Percy gave a slight start, as if she had just perceived him, and was astonished at his presence.

"Percy, my lord, can this be possible?" she exclaimed, stepping upon a fragment of rock, and springing from one stone to another till she stood by his side. "Nay, this is an unexpected pleasure," she said, giving her hand with cordial frankness to the young noble, who received it with some show of constraint. "Though I can hardly claim the right to welcome guests at Hever Castle in the absence of its lord: and while Mistress Anne presides there, Lord Percy can never be an unwelcome visitor even to her."

"I trust not, lady," replied Lord Percy, struck unpleasantly by the manner in which Anne was mentioned. "It would be a strange thing indeed if Henry Percy lacked a cordial greeting here."

"All changes seem strange to those who suffer by them," said Eleanor, turning her eyes upon him with a hesitating and compassionate look.

"Of what changes speak you, fair lady? The tone and manner in which you mention persons here surprise me more than anything else," said Percy, in a voice that, spite of himself, was a little unsteady.

Eleanor gazed in his face an instant, bent her dark eyes to the earth, and seemed to ponder some painful thought in her mind.

"You have not seen Mistress Anne, then?" she said after a moment.

"Seen her—no," said Percy, becoming more and more dissatisfied with Eleanor's manner—"how were that possible? We are yet half a mile from Hever Castle, where I soon trust to surprise the sweet lady in her own bower-room."

"Then she did not know of your coming?" inquired Eleanor, while a look of hesitation and painful doubt settled more and more visibly on her face.

"I did not know of it myself half an hour before my back was turned upon the court, fair lady."

"It is strange," muttered Eleanor, pressing a rosy finger thoughtfully on her lip, while her eyes was bent to the earth again—"from my sister's restless manner I should have supposed that she expected some one, and if not—but it must be so, her heart divined your coming before you knew of it yourself. I am sure of it, though she would not take me into her confidence as in former days," cried the beautiful woman with sudden animation, and looking up with a relieved and brightened countenance. "If some troublesome suspense had just left my heart. At any rate," again Eleanor cast down her eyes, and they seemed filling with tears, "had the despised

and rejected Eleanor been thus happy in Percy's love it would have been so with her!"

"Lady!" exclaimed Percy, in a voice that bespoke both pain and displeasure.

"It needs not that tone, Lord Percy, to remind Eleanor Boleyn that even a sad memory of the past is forbidden to her," said the strange young creature bitterly, and her splendid eyes flashed with proud anger. "But even now, so forgiving and so humble is this woman's nature, I can pray heaven that your own proud and cruel heart may not suffer all that it has inflicted on mine!—or if it must, that it may forget former tenderness and forgive treachery as I have forgotten and forgiven!"

There was pure sadness in her tone as the latter portion of this sentence was uttered, and she turned away as if about to recross the brook.

Percy dismounted from his horse, and drew the bridle over his arm, her tone and manner, joined to the vague allusions made in her speech, filling him with apprehensions the more painful, because they awoke a recollection of the anonymous letter, which, up to this time, he had resolutely cast from his mind as unworthy of notice.

"It is getting dusky among the trees," he said, "and before you can reach the castle it will be quite dark. Were it not safer to walk along the highway under my escort?"

Eleanor hesitated, cast a look into the forest, and drew toward him as if with some reluctance. His noble heart reproached him for the wound his reproof had given to her pride, and he addressed her with the gentle courtesy that was most natural to him.

"You will not suffer resentment at my rude speech to deprive me of a guide through these thick trees?" he said. "I can give you news of your noble bridegroom, for we met but the day before I left London."

"I hope that Arthur is well," said Eleanor abstractedly, and still gazing into the forest as if reluctant to go on—then as if suddenly remembering the whole import of his address, she added with a degree of earnestness that seemed quite unaffected. "Resentment, oh, no, I was but anxious," she paused, hesitated, and went on, "I was but seeking for my fair sister. It was nightfall before she came in yesterday evening, and almost as late the day before. Were her health to suffer, I might be blamed for not interposing in her father's absence, to prevent these long walks. It was this that brought me so far from the castle. But she must have returned home as I find her not, so I will walk on with you!"

There was something in the tone and manner



more than the words of the speech that struck upon Percy's heart unpleasantly, and for a moment he walked on by Eleanor's side, very anxious, and yet unwilling to ask any questions that might betray his feelings to the young creature who had with so much art excited them.

"These night dews are certainly unwholesome," he said at last. "You act but kindly in persuading Mistress Anne from encountering them."

"If that were all the danger," murmured Eleanor in an under tone, but which reached as it was intended, the heart of Lord Percy. He could endure the torture of suspense into which she had flung him no longer. He cried,

"What is the meaning of all this? To what do these vague speeches tend? In common humanity, fair lady, keep me no longer in suspense! Is there any reason to suppose that I shall be unwelcome at Hever Castle?"

They were now approaching that sharp angle in the road where it crossed the brook. Hitherto it had wound along the unequal banks of the rivulet, and being both narrow and shadowed with trees, a person pursuing it could seldom see any object more than ten or twenty yards in advance. The grass on either side was thick and mossy, smothering the sound of every foot-fall, either of man or beast, that fell upon it. Still Percy had heard once or twice the light fall of a hoof moving on before them, but the wood was full of deer, and taking it for one of those animals browsing on the way side, he scarcely heeded it, but as he addressed the last anxious question to his companion, the distinct tread of a horse was broken by a sound as if a leap had been urged, and the hoofs of the animal had struck in the water, or upon moist earth in coming down.

"Hush!" said Eleanor, and a flash of red flow like lightning across her cheek—"some one is moving in advance, and might hear us—besides I have nothing to say: doubtless you will be welcome at the castle: my words implied nothing else—why should they?"

That moment a bend of the rivulet gave them a full view some distance up its bed, especially where the road fell across it. Upon the opposite bank Percy saw a horseman finely mounted, and recovering his hunter from a leap which he had just made across the ford. The man sprang from his horse, and his face was an instant turned toward Percy.

"Great heavens, it is the king!" burst from the astonished noble, and he involuntarily fell back a pace. The next instant he saw a female come eagerly down the path with joy in every impetuous movement, and fling herself in the

outstretched arms of the king. Percy did not speak, but his face turned white as death, and staggering back as if some one had aimed a fierce blow at him, he fell against his horse, and flinging one arm over the animal's neck, thus prevented himself from falling to the earth. He saw the king bend his head. He knew that those gross lips were pressed to Anne Boleyn's face. A mist came before his eyes, and covering them with one hand, he stood by his horse a moment, sick and shuddering all over with disgustful grief. A moment and his whole demeanor changed; he stood erect; his teeth were clenched, and his pale lips clung over them as if frozen together. He sprang to the saddle, and bending his white face toward Eleanor—who, bold as she was, shrunk back affrighted by the gleam of those burning eyes—he addressed her in a hoarse whisper—

"Tell her that I have seen this."

He said no more, and did not even turn his eyes again toward the opposite bank, but wheeling his horse slowly around, rode away.

Eleanor followed him with her eyes till he was out of sight, holding her breath and trembling faintly with a sort of malicious thrill, half pleasure, half pain. Then her small mouth curved into a triumphant smile, and she murmured—"ah, to enjoy this exquisite hate one must have loved as I did."

She did not speak above her breath, and after casting a glance at Anne Boleyn, who had sunk to the king's feet overwhelmed with sensations of which the reader is already aware, she softly retraced her steps along the rivulet, and crossing on the broken rocks in its bed, though the deepening twilight, rendered the task a difficult one—she hurried through the woods in order to intercept King Henry and Anne Boleyn before they reached the castle.

Chance had aided her wicked designs that day till it seemed like a miracle even to herself.

#### CHAPTER VI.

WEEKS went by, and Anne Boleyn's life at Hever Castle became one of wild and feverish excitement. No letter, no message reached her from Lord Percy, and for more than a week after the king's visit, every day was marked by another of those ardent and impassioned letters from the mighty monarch that have become portions of history. Sometimes these letters were received with cold and freezing disdain, at other times Anne would read them with brightening eyes, and a smile of mocking triumph curled her lip, and she would murmur, "he is silent; he has forgotten me, while the king, his master, lives beneath my feet thus,



thus!" Then she would cast the letters down and trample on them, wild with contending feelings. Twice the king presented himself at Hever Castle, but Anne refused to see him. Each time Henry held a long interview with Arthur Boleyn's bride, and during these interviews the attendants heard the king's voice raised to an angry and heated tone, as if he were keenly disappointed, and reproaching the lady for some failure of a given promise. At these times Eleanor always made a more strenuous effort to persuade her beautiful sister-in-law to leave her chamber, but all in vain. Anne was becoming suspicious of her importunity, and the artful woman dared not encroach upon her impatient nature further.

At last Henry returned to London, and now the fever of pride, wounded tenderness, and half waking ambition which his presence had excited in Anne Boleyn's bosom went off, and she sunk to a state of languid despondency more painful to witness than all the tumult of bewildering feelings that had so late agitated it. She would sit for hours together pondering over a book, or engaged in her embroidery, with moist eyelashes and unsteady lips; like a young mother mourning over the grave of her only child, sad and regretful, but still with a hope in the future, faint, and dying day by day in her heart, like perfume from a fading flower. Her doubt of Percy's constancy at first admitted to her mind as a sort of sacrilege, had now deepened into a painful fear, not that his love had changed, she did not believe this for a moment, but she began to doubt his resolution and his ability to brave the commands of Cardinal Wolsey, his haughty father, and most of all, the king, whose motives for breaking off their engagement were now broadly revealed to her.

And so the time wore on, each day bringing its false hope and its bitter disappointment.

One evening, about four weeks after King Henry's visit to Hever Castle, Anne sat alone in her bower-room. She had been restless all day, and in order to quell the feelings that rose so bitterly in her heart as the sunset came on, still marking another period of Percy's neglect, she had wandered into the park walking fast and far, scarcely conscious of her own rapid movements, for there was relief to her ardent nature in violent physical action. She returned to her bower-room, worn out and languid with over exertion. As she sank to her easy chair, her eyes closed, while heavy tears forced themselves like crushed diamonds through the knitted lashes. Her head sunk gently to the support of one hand that was bent inward, till the slender fingers touched her shoulder, and a dull, weary

feeling, half sleep, half stupefaction, fell upon her. The sound of horses approaching the castle fell upon her ear without arousing her to a consciousness that visitors were coming, and it was not till the door of her bower-room was flung open, and she found herself in her father's arms, that the weary girl was aware of his return home.

"Oh, my father!—my father!" she cried, trembling in his arms, and pressing her lips to his face as if they could bribe some happy tidings from him—"now, now I shall be content again—but come you alone, quite alone?"

"Nay, Arthur came with me, sweet daughter. He did but pause to greet the fair dame whom King Harry has given thee for a sister, in her own room; he will be here anon; but sit down on this stool at my feet, gentle daughter, for I have news that will stir thy heart, else thou art no true Boleyn!"

Poor Anne! the very mention of news did indeed stir her heart till its quick throbs made her faint. She could not speak, but sat down upon the stool, and lifting that beautiful, pale face to his, waited for him to speak. Sir Thomas gazed down upon her, and a brilliant smile illuminated her fine features.

"Now tell me, if thou canst, what tidings it is that I have to impart!" he said, fondly playing with her impatience.

"I know not—I dare not guess!" said Anne, her lips grew red and broke into a lovely smile, like a rose-bud bursting open when its heart is drenched with dew. "You could not smile upon me thus if it were evil tidings."

"Evil, thou shalt hear, child, for I see by those flashing eyes that some bright thought is aroused in thy mind. Three weeks since this day, by the king's great munificence, thy father was created Viscount Rochford, and appointed treasurer of the royal household."

The smile left Anne's lips, and she shrank back paler than before, and with a gesture of keen disappointment—almost of indignation.

"Why, Anne, these tidings seem to please thee not, as I expected!" said Sir Thomas, gazing at her in surprise. "Is a place in the peerage of England of so little moment that thou canst find no word of gratulation for thy father, or of gratitude to the king?"

"This news has taken me by surprise, I—I would know at what price—forgive me, my father, I have not been well, and these tidings are so strange, so terribly important!"

Anne burst into tears, and covered her face with both hands to avoid the penetrating and displeased look that Sir Thomas fixed upon her.

"Thou art sadly changed Anne," said Sir

Thomas, after a moment of silent surprise—"and seem scarcely so grateful for a father's advancement as becomes the daughter of a house that has been so greatly ennobled—but I have other tidings for thee!"

Anne looked up, her eyes flashed through their tears, and she held her breath.

Sir Thomas paused, and regarded her with a stern and searching look.

"I was about to speak of one whose name has been somewhat too often coupled with thine since it has been the expressed wish of our sovereign that he should wed with another. I speak of Lord Henry Percy."

"Ah, father, father, you have not turned against us also!" cried Anne, sliding from the stool to her knees. "Have you but known how deeply we love each other——"

Sir Thomas checked her before the sentence was finished.

"Hush, Anne, or thou may'st say in thy passion what a father might blush to hear, and then to remember—three weeks ago Lord Percy was married to Lady Mary Talbot!"

Anne sprang to her feet with a low cry like that of some timid animal struck to the heart by an arrow. Her face and neck, even her hands, become hueless as marble. She stood thus during half a minute perhaps, and then sunk slowly to her knees, not as if she intended an act of homage or supplication, but helplessly like some animal when it falls to die, with the shaft in its side.

"Father, tell me—this was only said to try my faith in him—you did it to frighten me, sir. I am not frightened!" and the poor girl tried to smile.

"I have told only what myself witnessed," said Sir Thomas somewhat sternly, for her evident distress displeased him. "The splendor of Lord Percy's marriage was the marvel of half London."

"He was forced to wed her—it was not his free act, I will not believe it!" cried Anne, in a voice of keen anguish, joined to a look that revealed the deep pain she suffered.

"It was the king—it was Cardinal Wolsey—himself urged on the marriage, at least so his father, the old earl, informed me with his own lips," said Sir Thomas.

Anne's face drooped forward, and she covered it with her trembling hands, she seemed struggling for tears, but they choked her utterance without moistening her eyes. Suddenly she removed her hands and looked up, "father, you have no pity on me! You do not know all! In the sight of heaven I was betrothed to Lord Henry Percy. In secret—without your sanction

our faith was plighted—solemnly plighted, each to the other."

"Let maiden pride bury the secret then," said Sir Thomas sternly, "I would not have it hinted about in Henry's court that any man living had dared to cast this slight on a daughter of mine."

Again Anne covered her face, and when she looked up a flash of red kindled over her pale cheeks, and upon her dark lashes trembled a single tear.

"I would not see my daughter degraded at the court of that monarch who has just loaded me with honors, and all for her sake! It were a glorious triumph to the fickle Percy could he see the lady to whom kings would fain pay homage, trembling and weeping over his careless desertion of her."

"He shall never see that!" cried Anne, rising to her feet, while the crimson flush burned like flame on her cheeks.

"It were an insult to thy father, and to the king, who honors thee so greatly with his favor, were mortal eye ever to witness it again. It might even ruin the brightest and most lofty designs ever imagined for the benefit of a subject," said Sir Thomas.

"I do not understand all that you are saying!" said Anne, pressing a hand to her forehead—"the king, what said you of his majesty?"

"I said that the king loves you, Anne: he told me so when last I saw him at court: he told me of his visit here, of thy coldness, and——"

"He told you these things, father—he dared, and what answer did you make the royal profligate, sir," cried Anne, with a look of superb scorn.

"I told him," said Sir Thomas calmly, "that when he could make Anne Boleyn queen of England, she had her father's sanction to his suit."

"Queen of England," cried Anne, with a wild and thrilling laugh that was full of mockery—"Queen of England. Yes, yes, that were safely promised. I trust that his majesty will not visit the roof that shelters Anne Boleyn till he has that power!"

"It may be his, and more speedily than most people deem," replied Sir Thomas, fixing his eyes calmly upon the wild beauty of his daughter's face.

"Is Queen Catharine dead—or ill unto death—that you say this so calmly, father?"

"When thou art quieter and capable of such grave thought as the subject requires, we will talk of this matter," replied Sir Thomas—"but hark, I hear Arthur, with his wife, coming hitherward—I would not that this fair daughter-in-law should witness how much the news

of Lord Percy's marriage has discomposed thee, Anne—those flushed eyes and burning cheeks but ill become the beauty which made a monarch captive. Steal through yon door, child, and come back in more seemly fashion, I will appear to be waiting for thee here!"

Anne Boleyn required no second bidding to seek the solitude for which her fevered heart panted. She left the room, and without going to her chamber or casting even a veil over her, she ran wildly down a flight of steps that led from her bower-room to a private postern, and issued into the park unmantled, pale and breathless. It was a gloomy night. Clouds dark and leaden were sweeping in masses over the sky, giving even to those stars that struggled through their black folds a pale and sickly hue. The heavily wooded park lay before her one dense mass of blackness; great drops of rain fell at intervals upon her hair as she sped along, and the turf under her feet was damp with a fine mist that had been settling upon it during the last half hour. The poor girl heeded nothing of this; her brain was in confusion; her heart was full of anguish; she plunged under the damp, dark trees, and wandered on wringing her hands and sobbing piteously. She had no pride left. In the vast solitude of the wood her heart was unshackled, and poured forth its bitter sorrow in tears, and sometimes in words that sounded painfully amid the sweeping wind.

The rush of a brooklet crossing her path checked her wild flight. She paused, looked back, and saw by the great trees bending their knotted arms over her, that she was in the very spot where King Henry had dismounted from his horse on the day when he first visited Hever Castle.

A wild laugh broke from her lips, and folding her arms, she stood motionless in the black night lost in a deep fit of thought. Amid the desolation of her young heart a gleam of triumph, of keen and bitter pride had broken.

"Without a word—a look—a struggle, he has given me up—oh, holy mother of heaven, can such treason live in the human heart? And I loved him so—after all the past could he cast me from him so readily?" She paused, looked wildly around in the darkness, and the pride of her nature kindled higher and higher as she felt the elements rising and swelling angrily around her. "It was here, on this very spot, that his master and mine, the monarch of this great land, poured forth his gratitude like a feeble beggar for one mistaken caress, such as I have given to thee, false Percy, profusely as the violet that gives its blossoms to the child that seeks for them! He was at my feet—the king to whom

thou art a vassal, Percy—the great monarch of England, and I spurned him—but now, now—oh, it were ecstasy to show this recreant how madly the king seeks that which thou hast flung aside as worthless!"

Again the wretched girl paused, again her arms were tightly folded, and a fit of deep musing fell upon her. It lasted several minutes, and during the whole of that time she stood like a thing of marble, revealing the life that had become a pain only by occasional sharp sobs. At last she spoke, and the voice left her lips clear and ringing, like the low tones of a trumpet.

"The Queen of England—what did my father mean?—he is not one to brook the dishonorable suit even of a king—what did my father mean?"

Anne turned suddenly and retraced her way to the castle. It was now raining fast, and her garments were soon deluged with moisture, but she was all unaware of it, and the great drops that came drifting through her hair down her hot cheeks seemed to strike upon flame, so little was its cold touch felt.

She reached the castle, ascended the winding stairs, and entered her chamber. A serving woman who had just placed lights upon the toilet-table paused in her task, startled by the unearthly beauty of the face, which, spite of the dishevelled tresses that fell around it and of her dripping garments, was transcendent in its wild and brilliant loveliness.

"Go to my father, and say that I would speak with him here," said the fair girl, pausing in the midst of the room, where she remained with her garments falling in wet masses around her feet, till Sir Thomas presented himself at the door. "My father," said Anne, turning her bright eyes upon Sir Thomas, who did not observe the disarray of her dress in the large and dimly lighted chamber, "there was something in your speech just now that I did not comprehend. Said you not that King Henry might some day have the right of choosing another than Catharine of Aragon to sit by him on the throne?"

"Now that this question seems to imply some power of reasonable comprehension, I will speak on the subject," said Sir Thomas, drawing a chair close to that into which his daughter had sunk. "But remember, Anne, the king's wishes and intentions are with the exception of us two, known only to himself and Cardinal Wolsey—not even to thy brother must the secret be whispered."

"I understand, and will be secret."

"Then listen. It is now some months since Henry has felt great doubts of the validity of his marriage with Catharine, his brother's widow.



Cardinal Wolsey confirms this doubt, and many high prelates have within the last two weeks been privately consulted on the subject. All sustain the king in his design to apply for a divorce from Rome."

"This is strange news," said Anne, and the blood brightened in her cheek like flashes of fire. "How long is it since Henry's conscience become thus troubled?"

"His resolution regarding the divorce," replied Sir Thomas, with a meaning smile, "was harbored first after his visit to my castle here, which same visit seems to have aroused his sleeping conscience to a very painful degree."

"And he told you of that visit?" said Anne, fixing her bright eyes upon Sir Thomas.

"He did!"

"And did his highness inform the now Lord of Rochford all the honor which was intended to his child?"

"He only told me that which a father might hear with pride. Naught else transpired. If aught was said which Henry may have repented of, let it rest: I can trust the honor of our house in thy hands, dear child."

"You may!" said Anne, with a proud curve of the lip—"and his eminence, Cardinal Wolsey, knows he of the king's visit to Hever Castle?"

"I think that he does!"

"And sanctions it with any reference to this divorce?"

The blood mounted somewhat warmly over Sir Thomas' forehead, and he answered, "not with reference to the divorce. The king has breathed no syllable of his designs in full to any one but myself, and that under a strict charge of secrecy, which it were treason to violate. I have only permission to mention it thus privately here."

"Tell me, father, did Cardinal Wolsey use persuasion or authority to urge forward the marriage of Lord Shrewsbury's daughter?"

"I cannot tell. The marriage was sudden, and the preparations hurried as they were brilliant: by what influence it was brought about I never could learn, save that the old earl insisted on the fulfilment of a contract signed in the infancy of his son, and Percy made no objection!"

"I can see it all," cried Anne, half rising from her chair, "that proud cardinal has trifled with my destiny as if it had been a tennis ball in the hands of skilful players. Under the sacred robes of mother church he would pander to the king's worst views. Percy has been removed that Anne Boleyn may become the more ready minion of his royal master. Catharine of Arragon has failed in her promise—all, all is lost!"

"No, not all! Is a crown nothing?" said Sir

Thomas, in a low, soothing voice. "Is the power of lifting thy somewhat reduced house to a position among the highest of the land, nothing? Is the power to crush those that have wronged thee, nothing? See what a bright future these very disappointments has opened to thee!"

"Father—father, they have uprooted all the sweet flowers that lay in my path, and have trodden it down hard with gold. All the bright, beautiful hopes that I lived upon are swept away forever. If I could perish here at your feet, it were far happier for your child than any prospect the future can hold out to me. But we cannot die when we will!" Here the poor girl's voice trembled, and her countenance took an expression of unutterable despondency, "I say to you, father, my heart is broken, but it will not yield up its hold on existence. Life clings to it like ivy around a ruin. If any hand save mine could rend it away, the grave were more welcome to me this night than you couch with all its glare of purple and gold."

"Nay, dear child, this is but the first effects of a disappointment which will soon be lost in brighter things," said Sir Thomas, deeply affected at her grief, for he was both proud and fond of his beautiful daughter—"remember to what exaltation all this may tend. Thou art of a noble race, Anne, and the pride of thy ancient blood should check this weak repining for the faithlessness of one who loves thee not."

Anne made an impatient gesture and her brow contracted.

"Cast him from thy heart and mind till thou canst look down upon him and his bride from thy place on a monarch's throne. Percy has but deprived thy brow of a coronet that his master may encircle it with a crown. Think of him no more!"

Anne shook her head with a sad smile, "that which you hold out to me may be real. It may even at a future time move my heart somewhat, but now it seems only as a vision of frost work, cold, brilliant, and uncertain of duration. My brain is disturbed with all that has been pressed upon it this night!"

"Thou dost indeed seem ill, poor child," said Sir Thomas. "But seek some rest, I will excuse thy absence from the supper-table, for Arthur and his wife must remain ignorant of the king's secret."

"It is not strange," he added, "that all this should seem unreal to thee; even I could not at first bring myself to look on the grace Henry intends us as anything but a dazzling vision."

"I cannot be more unhappy if it prove so!" murmured Anne, shaking her head.

"But it will not—no one can be more

thoroughly in earnest than the king. He has resolved to make room for thee, my sweet child, upon his throne, and when Henry Tudor wills a thing it is accomplished. See, is not this a foreshadowing of his purpose worthy a great monarch? Henry bade me place this jewel at thy feet, and say that, with all loving and honorable intent, he will follow the gift in person the moment he can find means of leaving the court for a brief space without exciting comment."

As Sir Thomas spoke, he drew a casket from his bosom, and dropping on one knee before his child, opened the lid and held a band of linked gold, pointed at one edge like a crown, and set thickly with jewels of inestimable value. It was an ornament often worn by ladies of regal station, and never assumed by one of lower grade.

A gleam from the candles fell upon the jewel as it was lifted from the casket, and Anne shrunk back covering her eyes, as if the flashes of rainbow light struck from the stones had blinded her.

"Take it hence! Rise, I pray you rise. All this will drive me mad!"

Sir Thomas stood up with the jewel in his hand.

"Nay, Anne, it is not thus the king's munificence should be received: see, it belongs to the crown jewels. No queen of England ever possessed a richer circlet."

Anne flung aside her hands with a passionate movement, and turned her eyes upon the ornament.

"Ah, father—father, one little flower from the hand of Harry Percy were worth a world of these cold stones to me."

Sir Thomas coldly replaced the king's gift in its casket and laid it upon the table.

"Must I again remind a daughter of the Boleyns that she speaks of another woman's husband?" he said, casting a glance of stern reproach on the unhappy girl.

"Spare me—oh, spare me this displeasure," she cried, wringing her hands—"give me this one night for solitude and grief—after that I care not what becomes of me—a throne or the grave—I will mount one or lie down in the other as you command."

"Anne, this excessive emotion is unmaidenly, it is degrading—" Sir Thomas paused, for his child's face was turned to the light, and the agony imprinted upon it terrified him. She held her hands out toward him with a piteous and supplicating smile.

"I am ill, father—I am ill! See how my limbs shake, yet amid these freezing chills are flashes of fire darting through and through me. It may be that your unhappy child will perish after all."

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She paused and her white teeth knocked together, "is this death, or the breaking up of a heart that is henceforth to be as marble?" she continued, more and more wildly.

Sir Thomas became seriously alarmed. He saw that she was indeed shivering from head to foot, while fever flashes shot like lightning over her pale cheek. She arose and attempted to walk across the room but reeled unsteadily, and Sir Thomas threw his arm around her.

"Blessed saints, her garments are drenched with rain," he cried in great alarm, "my poor, poor child!" and drawing the sobbing young creature toward him, Sir Thomas kissed her forehead tenderly and tried to soothe her.

"Sit down, love—sit down, I will send thy tiring woman to disrobe thee, thou art in truth very ill."

Anne lifted up her head and laughed wildly. Her cheek was on fire, and fever raged in her eyes. She suffered herself to be placed in the chair again, and when Sir Thomas went out to search for help she had closed her eyes, and her cheek fell against the crimson cushion red and glowing as the velvet it touched.

Sir Thomas met with some delay in finding the person whom he sought, and when the attendant at last entered Anne Boleyn's chamber, the unhappy girl was standing before a mirror of steel plate, holding up a light with one hand, and setting the demi crown upon her head with the other. Her hair fell in bright masses, damp but still curling, around her face, and the crimson of her robe took a singular effect, shining out in glowing particles where it had dried upon her person—the rest keeping that dull black imparted by moisture, thus the garment seemed made of two distinct materials. Her cheeks were in a blaze of scarlet, and the gems that flashed and circled in a thousand tints around her head were scarcely brighter than those large dark eyes.

The woman paused by the door, astonished and half terrified.

"Come hither, Joan—come hither, this thing galls my forehead, and I know not how to rend the clasp," cried Anne, turning with the light in her hand, which kindled among the gems and rendered the wild beauty of her face almost dazzling. "I knew—I knew when it had once girded my temples no power on earth could help me—and now such pains are shooting from every gem through and through my brain. Well, well, I have borne worse things to-night, and so will be patient good Joan." She set down the light, shook her head sadly, and casting an eager glance toward the bed, moved across the room with wavering footsteps, and fell, with a deep sigh

of pain, among the waves of gorgeous silk that covered it.

"My poor young lady, dear, sweet mistress, let me take off this heavy robe," cried the woman, quite unable to restrain her tears.

"This first—this first," said Anne, lifting one burning hand to her forehead, and making a faint struggle to sit upright.

Joan took the circlet from her head—which was indeed of sufficient weight to cause suffering to one already irritated by fever, and with a sigh of exquisite relief that amounted almost to a laugh, Anne sunk to the bed again. She offered no resistance when the maid proceeded to take off her robe, and only murmured entreaties to be left alone, for she had much to think of before the next day, she said, when she and Percy, with his bride, Lady Mary, were going down into the woods in search of wild flowers for the king. She began to laugh with a sort of childish glee as this thought passed through her brain, and murmuring it over and over she sunk to a heavy slumber, broken every moment with some half uttered fantasies, wilder than that which had gone before.

When King Henry came down to Hever Castle a week after the night we have described, he found Anne Boleyn still in the delirium of a brain fever. Sir Thomas would gladly have kept the monarch from her bed-side, for there was much that fell from that young girl's lips in the beautiful wanderings of her mind that the prudent father sought to withhold from the ear of her royal love—but Henry was stubborn in his determination to see the lovely sufferer, and during the time that he remained in her chamber, Sir Thomas was startled by many a wild and thrilling sentence, that seemed every instant about to lay all the secrets of that young heart before the man who held its destiny in his hand.

Henry did not appear to mark the delirious speeches in which Percy's name was frequently uttered, with many a wild burst of passionate tenderness; but in after years these disconnected ravings were brought up in terrible array against the hapless creature, who now lay quite unconscious of the evil her own fevered lips were coining for the future. If they affected the present it was only to increase the ardent desire which King Henry felt to secure the love of a being so capable of all that deep poetical tenderness which could alone satisfy his supremely selfish nature.

The difficulty he had met in exciting such tenderness was perhaps the greatest incentive to Henry's pursuit of Anne Boleyn. There was a pleasant excitement to the pampered monarch

in loving one thing on earth which his power alone could not command.

#### CHAPTER VII.

How weak and fragile a thing has sometimes instigated those great events that have stamped themselves on the history of nations, as it were, with a foot-print of iron. To the lovely girl whom we left feeble and broken-hearted upon the couch of pain, may be traced that political, social and religious convulsion that shook the church of Rome to its centre, and rescued a great kingdom from her sway centuries before it could have been accomplished by the natural progress of mind. Passion after all is sometimes stronger than intellect. When both are combined, as in Henry the Eighth, and their union linked with unquestioned power, what force can contend against them?

Nearly three years have swept by since we left Anne Boleyn on a sick bed, worn out and almost crushed by the force of her wounded and impassioned feelings. Those three years had been crowded with events that have left their traces upon the destiny of our Anglo Saxon race to this day. During that time Queen Catharine, the noble and the good, had been thrust rudely from her husband's throne, and was now pining to death broken in spirit and separated from her only child in her humble house of Bugden. In those three years many a noble had fallen upon the scaffold, many a warm heart had been crushed beneath the iron hand of power, in order that Henry Tudor might gratify a passion, which, but for the opposition that made these things necessary, might have expired of its own coarse violence.

There was change everywhere in England; but the most painful of all was that which had fallen upon Anne Boleyn. She had said the truth! The blossoms of her young life were torn up, and their place trodden down with gold. Pride, ambition, and all those energies of mind and person that these passions bring upon woman's nature, had gradually steeled a heart once so full of tenderness. We left her a lovely, passionate and gentle girl—she appears upon our pages again a brilliant woman. Her life was one long fever of excitement. Her aim was the crown of England.

She had spent months in the solitude of Hever Castle. She had plunged in the gaities of Henry's court, invested with all the splendor of a queen. She had witnessed the sufferings of her former queen and benefactress with a steady pulse. She had hurled Cardinal Wolsey from the topmost step of Henry's throne into the very grave. Thus much had she accomplished to avenge herself on



those who had swept all joys, save those of cold ambition, from her path of life. The rich fruit of the king's passion had begun to fall thickly around her and hers. In the royal palace of Windsor, from which Catharine had been expelled, Anne Boleyn was created Marchioness of Pembroke, surrounded by all the splendor of a queenly coronation. Her father was exalted to an earldom, and her brother possessed the title of Viscount Rochford. Now there was but one step more between the young girl whom we introduced to our readers half buried in the wild blossoms of a village festival, and the throne of England.

Hever Castle had been deserted by its lordly owner for more than a year, and the old retainers had almost despaired of seeing their master and young mistress, endowed with their new honors, when the whole family came down, accompanied by two illustrious guests, the Duke and Duchess of Norfolk.

About ten days after this party reached the castle, King Henry arrived at its portal sometime after nightfall, and attended only by two persons, one of whom seemed by his robes to possess some high clerical standing.

Sir Thomas Boleyn—now the Earl of Wiltshire—came forth to greet the monarch, but Henry sprang from the saddle without waiting for the earl to bend his knee or touch the stirrup, and hurriedly entered the hall, only saying, "we trust that everything is in readiness, my Lord Wiltshire. Where can we find the Lady Anne?"

"She is in her bower-room, my liege," replied Lord Wiltshire, "with her grace of Norfolk and Lady Rochford."

"Ay," muttered Henry, "we must take caution that the sweet lady of Rochford remain not too near the person of our queen hereafter," and he passed on, followed by the earl, and a host of retainers bearing lights. "My lord, you must see that these gaping varlets have other occupation for both eyes and ears, anon. We must have no menial witnesses," whispered Henry, casting a displeased glance toward the men.

"A supper is provided for them in the kitchen," replied Wiltshire, in the same undertone which his master had used—"that will occupy them sufficiently!"

"It is well," replied Henry, and mounting the stairs he entered the chamber that had been prepared for him, followed by the earl.

"And now are all things arranged for strict privacy?" said Henry, casting his hat upon a table—"we trust our sweet lady has become reconciled to the concealment which is so necessary."

"Trusting to your gracious pledge, sire, that the event of this night shall only be kept private for a brief season; the Lady Anne waves all opposition to these arrangements: as for the rest I have not have revealed your intention to any one except her grace of Norfolk. Rochford may suspect something of it—and his wife perchance, for she has quick eyes."

"Let them both into the secret, we can trust your son, as for the lady" Henry paused, and drew off his glove with some energy, "she will not relish sweet Anne's exaltation enough to make it a subject of gossip, therefore—she, too, may be trusted. Go, my good lord, and arrange these things, meantime send up the trunk-mails and come speedily back again, for we can trust no lesser attendant to help us on with the wedding gear."

Five minutes after, the Lord Wiltshire stood in Lady Rochford's chamber, he was just going out and Eleanor followed him to the door. The room was dimly lighted, and Wiltshire could only see that she was somewhat pale, and that her eyes were more brilliant than usual. He could not detect the evil passions that darkened her face, and surprise might easily have occasioned the slight tremor that marked her voice when she spoke.

"All things shall be as you wish, my lord—I will be in readiness!"

These words were uttered in a soft, bland tone, somewhat tremulous, as I have said, but otherwise quite natural. The moment her chamber door was closed she turned toward the light, and her beautiful features were absolutely convulsed with fiendish passions.

"Is it to make her queen that I have toiled and plotted?" she exclaimed, clenching her hand and pressing her white teeth upon her nether lip till the blood left it.

"Have I linked myself to one that I cannot love—united the only man that I ever did love to one almost as hateful to me as she is, and now, now I have made her a queen. I did not think her pride could have brought the king to this! Can hate, like love, so work against itself?"

Eleanor stood for some moments perfectly still, with her glittering eyes fixed on the light, and her fingers clenched more tightly in the palm of her little hand. At length she broke into a low, self-mocking laugh.

"Well, now I have but to array myself for this royal wedding—her grace of Norfolk will doubtless have the honor of robing *the queen*."

With these bitterly spoken words Eleanor took up a small golden whistle from the table, and summoned her tiring woman.

Attached to Hever Castle was a small gothic chapel, ancient as the foundations of the main building, the inside heavy with sculptured stone work, and the windows dim with gorgeously colored glass. The altar of this chapel had once been a master piece of art, but it, with the whole building, had been defaced and mutilated in the war of the roses.

But notwithstanding the neglected state of this building, it had on the night our story closes, an aspect of solemn magnificence. The traces that time had left were lost amid the semi transparent shadows that hung around the windows and the groined roof. A foot-cloth of glowing velvet, heavily traced with gold, fell down the altar steps, receiving the light of six massive wax candles that stood at each corner and on the centre platform. These costly lights had just been fixed, and their rays filled the little building with a star-like glow that well befitted the quietude of a holy place.

About ten o'clock at night the king entered this chapel, leading Anne Boleyn by the hand. His garments of snow white velvet were sprinkled thickly with diamonds, two broad collars, studded with rubies, emeralds, and all those costly stones that blend most brilliantly together, fell over his broad bosom, and gleamed through the silken gold of his beard, seeming to light up his rich florid complexion by their own unaided brightness.

Nor was the royal bride less magnificently arrayed. The snow of her bridal robe was frosted with a deep bordering of pearls, and flushed, as it were, like the heart of a white rose, with a faint blossom tinge. Her superb ringlets were fastened by the light demi crown, Henry's first gift—and diamond sparks flashed through the folds of a transparent veil that flowed loosely from its confinement, as if she had been out in a slight rain, and the water drops still clung around her person.

There was no soft blush on Anne Boleyn's cheek, none of that modest sweetness in her eyes that renders the being so lovely who brings a warm heart, all in a delicious thrill of love and fear up to the marriage altar. There was pride, a sort of regal triumph in every beautiful lineament of her face. It flashed in her eyes and glowed, like light upon a rose, in the rich damask of her cheek and the deeper crimson of her exquisite mouth. It bent and swayed in every undulating motion of her superb form. Henry the Eighth, in whom was blended the richest blood of two kingly lines, looked not more thoroughly bred to the purple than his fair bride. In that hour of solemn triumph her heart beat on with a full and measured pulse—

that heart which once had trembled, like a flower upon its delicate stalk, to the slightest glance of Harry Percy's eye. Oh, it was a sad hour when Anne Boleyn smothered all the sweet, natural impulses of a good heart in the purple that was to blacken deep, deep for her funeral pall.

They stood up—that stately couple, and there by the altar received the congratulations of those few persons who had been permitted to witness the marriage ceremony. But the solemn stillness of the hour, the impressive ceremony just performed, cast a shadow over the whole group. Even Henry rose from the altar with a pallor upon his cheek, and there was something in his countenance that seemed as if a pang of sadness or remorse had struck upon his heart while his marriage vow was uttered. Did a memory of one who had slept in his bosom for twenty years, one whose last hope in life was extinguished by the vow he had just sacreligiously uttered to another, at last reach that proud heart? Or was it the shadow of coming events, black and heavy with blood, that settled, like a pall, upon that nuptial hour?

At length the door opened. A rush of wind swept over the altar extinguishing all the candles but one, and shrouding the whole group in a sort of gloomy twilight. Then they went forth, two by two, into the still darker night. Henry, with his bride, now pale and chilled with the gloom that hung over her, and the rest following after like mourners to a funeral. Was it strange that the heavens should have bent over that group black with portentous clouds? There was the tyrant pressing the hand and whispering words of passion in the ear of his present bride and future victim. There was Rochford tenderly supporting the steps of the wicked woman, who in less than four short years sent his young head to the block by her own foul and false evidence against him. There were Wiltshire and Norfolk, the uncle and father of that victim bride. One afterward the sternest and most relentless of those men who adjudged her to death. The other forced to save a degraded life by abject submission to the murderer of his child. There too was Norris, Henry's confidential gentleman, whose blood was also doomed to redden the block which was Anne Boleyn's death pillow. Was it not well that the heavens should frown black as the grave over a group like this?

It was on the fourteenth of November, 1532, that this fatal union was thus privately celebrated; and before the first of the ensuing May it was publicly proclaimed throughout the realm. In the following June the marriage of the king with his former queen was declared null by Cranmer at the head of his ecclesiastical

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court, the monarch having by this time come to an open rupture with the court of Rome, and defying its power by this act. The ratification of Henry's marriage with Anne, and her coronation rapidly followed: and thus was consummated Eleanor Howard's revenge, and Anne Boleyn's doom!

History relates in what manner the new queen, after a reign of scarcely four years, died on the block, a victim to the caprice of the sated monarch and the machinations of her jealous sister-in-law. To the chronicles of that day, we refer those who would peruse the melancholy story further!

THE END.

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